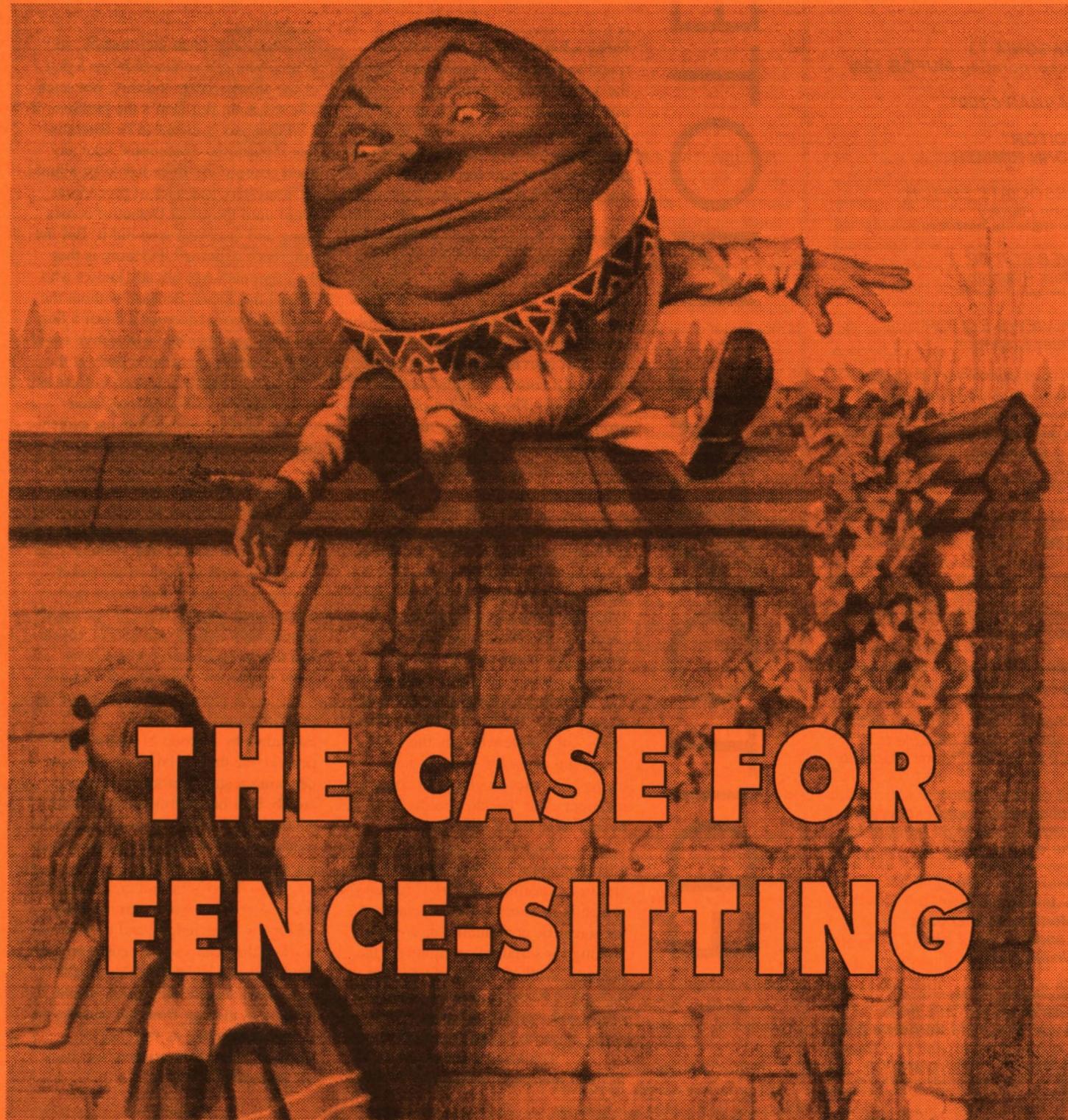


magonia • interpreting contemporary vision and belief • number 73 • january 2001 • £1.25

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# MAGONIA



**THE CASE FOR  
FENCE-SITTING**



# EDITORIAL NOTES

**MAGONIA 73**  
(incorporating MUFOB 120)

JANUARY 2001

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Magonia is available by exchange with other magazines, or by subscription at the following rates for four issues:

UK	£5.00
Europe	£6.00
	10.00 euros
USA	\$13.00
Elsewhere	£7.00

US subscribers must pay in dollar bills. We are unable to accept checks drawn on American banks.

We accept French banknotes at the rate of FF10 to £1.00

Cheques and money orders must be made payable to JOHN RIMMER, not 'Magonia'.

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## THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE SHOW BUSINESS

Fancy a fun evening? Why not pop round to your local hospital and watch the doctors saw off someone's leg, or maybe remove a malignant growth? Really gory: better than Stephen King. Or perhaps call at a nearby mental hospital and ask if you can have a laugh at the nutters. Talk about zany humour!

Outrageous? Unthinkable? Of course, but it was thought quite acceptable less than two hundred years ago. Tours of Bedlam, to literally rattle the cages of the inmates, were quite the fashion. And surgeons would regularly invite friends and family along to witness their activities in the operating theatre. Of course, we don't do that now, do we? The activities of the surgeon are seen as scientific medicine. The treatment of the medically ill is serious psychology. It's science, not entertainment.

So isn't ufology supposed to be like that? It's a serious science, isn't it? Everyone says so. Well, yes and no, but mostly no, because so much of it seems to be operated as showbusiness. When the Birdsall Brothers run their 'conferences', presenting with every fringe topic under the sun, are we to expect a serious, scientific colloquium, like a meeting of the British Medical Association? Are the hundreds - thousands - of people who pay their £10 - £15 going along for studious note-taking? No, they're going for entertainment. And, fair do's to the Birdsalls, by and large that's what they get.

And when Tim Good and Nick Pope turn out their latest books, are they expecting ponderous reviews in scientific journals and the acclaim of the scientific community, or are they looking for serialisation rights for the tabloids? And of course, if you start looking at Roswell, and the American media and conference circus, we're certainly closer to MGM than MIT.

But UFO writers have families and mortgages to support, so you

can't begrudge them their money, so long as you realise that they are a part of the entertainment industry, not scientific research. But here's the problem. If a UFO report is meant to be entertaining, it has to be mysterious. Like any good crime story, there has to be a build up, a mystery and a lot of procedural detail until the Great Detective comes along and discovers who did it. But the difference with the UFO story is that the eager audience already knows who did it - the aliens. Because without the aliens the story becomes a bit of a flop. It would be rather like a detective novel where the badly mutilated body at the foot of the stairs was just an unfortunate accident with a piece of loose stair-carpet. So these books give the audience just what it wants - like Hollywood.

I suppose you could accept ufology as entertainment if it was limited to thrilling tales of flying saucers and mysterious government plots, but it's when real people like abductees get hawked around in front of the ticket-buying public that I start to get really uneasy, and wonder if we are getting dangerously close to the sort of voyeurism that has long been driven from more respectable scientific disciplines.

A serious investigation of the puzzling experiences of an individual by a group of scientific experts is one thing. Having that person perform on stage before an audience largely bent on entertainment is quite another - and I don't think it matters too much whether that person is doing their act voluntarily or not.

There's been a great deal of discussion about why scientists hold ufology at arms length, and try to avoid it when they can - some people seem to think this is a sinister establishment plot. But I suspect that many people, looking at ufology from the outside, see it presenting itself as a branch of showbiz rather than science, and back off accordingly.

# INTELLIGENT LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE THE CASE FOR FENCE SITTING

GARETH J MEDWAY



There has been some recent debate about the likelihood of intelligent life existing in other solar systems, with specific reference to the UFO question. As you would expect, ETH believers think that intelligent life is probably very common, whilst ETH sceptics suggest that it may be very rare.

BOTH SIDES ARE ABLE TO support their cases with the opinions of scientists, for the simple reason that scientists are themselves divided on the issue. For instance, it has often been said that UFOs cannot be spacecraft because interstellar travel is impossible. By contrast, a recent article in *Scientific American* by Ian Crawford, (1) argues that there are no other intelligent races in the Milky Way, since interstellar travel is so straightforward that any race that arose more than a few million years before us would by now have colonised the whole galaxy. The lack of a consensus among scientists on these issues is further shown by the fact that, though Crawford cites the failure of SETI to detect intelligent radio signals as a proof of the absence of other advanced civilisations out there, his article is immediately followed by one by George W. Swenson which points out the difficulties of using radio to communicate across interstellar distances. This latter effectively disposes of the negative results from SETI as evidence.

Now, to state the obvious, there are two ways of assessing a probability: either one takes a random sample of actual occurrences; or, if one exactly understands the processes involved, one can calculate the likelihood of those processes occurring at any given time. Either method, or both, will establish a probability: but not neither.

We are not currently able to go around sampling star systems and seeing how many of

them bear intelligent life. Nor, I contend, do we have any real understanding, let alone exact knowledge, of how it arose on Earth, still less how it may have done anywhere else. So how can we talk about its probability?

To examine this in detail, consider an informal conference which was held in 1961 at the Green Bank observatory, West Virginia, to assess the possibility of communication with other worlds. Frank Drake represented the conference's central problem thus:  $N = R^* f_p n_p f_f J$ . (2)  $N$  is the number of civilisations in the galaxy that are currently capable of communicating with other solar systems. Unfortunately, none of the variables on the other side of the equation are known accurately.

$R^*$  is the rate at which stars were being formed in the galaxy during the period when the solar system itself was born. Since the age of the galaxy and the number of stars in it are known approximately, the astronomers present were able to say with confidence that a conservative estimate would be one new star a year. This was an example of sampling from observation.

$f_p$  is the fraction of stars that have planets. In 1961 there was no evidence whatsoever on this point, yet the conferrers concluded that that it "might be as low as one fifth". Actually, for all anyone knew at that time, our solar system might have been unique. It is only in the past decade that measurement of Doppler wobble has made it possible to detect large Jupiter-like planets

## There have been recent attempts to settle the argument, one of which has generated a lot of heat - or at least hot air

around other stars. (Previous reports of the discovery of extra-solar planets eventually turned out to have been caused by observational errors.) Several are now known, making it clear that planets are common, perhaps the rule rather than the exception. (Though it is not proven that rocky Earth-like planets also exist.) But the process of planetary formation is still not sufficiently well understood for us to assign an exact probability to it, in the way that we can say that there is a 50 per cent chance of a tossed coin coming up tails.

$n_e$  is the number of planets, per solar system, with an environment suitable for life. The only clue we have to this is our own solar system, on which there is only one such planet (though it is thought that Mars may once have had life). One can hardly generalise on this basis, but the Green Bank men did, putting the figure "probably" between one and five.

$f_l$  is the fraction of suitable planets on which life actually appears, on which they decided that "given a time period measured in billions of years, life must sooner or later appear", so that they gave it a factor of one. Now, while it has been shown that amino acids might have been formed in the primitive atmosphere of the Earth, it has also been calculated that the chances of them arranging themselves into a strand of DNA is so unlikely that the odds are wildly against it having happened even once in the lifetime of the universe. This has led to various speculations, some saying that this proves that Earth is the only planet with life, though personally I think it most likely there is something seriously flawed in the theory. But without any coherent (still less proven) theory of how life arose here, then we are in no position at all to say how often it is likely to happen anywhere else.

An important lacuna occurred here: they jumped straight

from the appearance of life to the appearance of intelligent life. In between these is the appearance of complex, multi-cellular life, a necessary but not sufficient condition for the emergence of intelligence. On Earth, this process is highly mysterious. Up until the late pre-Cambrian, perhaps 650 million years ago, the only life was single-celled. After a short transition period in which there were a few multi-celled life forms, quite suddenly the Cambrian explosion brought into being practically all of the known phyla of life, including many types of sea creature not all that different from their descendants today. This "explosion" took not more than a few million years - only one thousandth of the time that the Earth had been in existence. No one seems to have any idea why so much of the development of life happened in such a short space of time. So, again, in the absence of a plausible theory to explain this, who can say what its likelihood is?

$f_i$  is the fraction of life-bearing planets on which intelligence emerges. On the basis that two intelligent species, humans and dolphins, are found on Earth, they thought this fraction would be large. But again, can one generalise from the example of our planet alone?

$f_c$  is the fraction of intelligent societies that develop the ability and desire to communicate with other worlds - again, guesswork.

$L$  is the longevity of each technology in the communicative state. The 1961 conference was well aware that nuclear war threatened. So far it hasn't eventuated, but we are not yet in a position to say that a technological society may last long.

A chain with a link missing is useless, and so is an equation in which even one of the variables is unknown. In the present case, an actual majority of the variables cannot even be esti-

mated. The probability of extraterrestrial life is not therefore currently a scientific question at all.

However, there have been recent attempts to settle the argument, one of which has generated a lot of heat, or at least hot air. In the blue corner we have Michael Swords, a professor of natural sciences, who, with the stated motive to defend the ETH as an explanation for the UFO phenomenon,

has argued that extraterrestrial intelligence is likely to be very common. In the red corner, Peter Brookesmith, whose unstated motive is evidently to discredit the ETH, and who thinks intelligent life to be as rare as intelligent writing on the subject of usology.

Swords thinks that

this: "Once life forms on a world in the continuously habitable zone, almost no one believes in anything other than a continued advance in complexity. Though the trick of piecing together advanced eukaryotic cells and multicellular organisms seems, at least on our own planet, to be a tough puzzle (three billion or so years in the solving), once past this barrier the process of forming rich ecologies and ever more fascinating life forms should be unleashed . . . Any world circling a sun-like star with enough time in the habitable zone should develop advanced intelligence, and if the habitat is terrestrial (rather than aquatic), that intelligence

should flourish into a materials-manipulating technical civilisation." (3)

Brookesmith's rebuttal (4) is, interestingly, about ten times the length of the section of Swords's essay that he is criticising. He finds Swords's work to be partial, partisan,



**RAYMOND  
DRAKE**

tendentious, humourless, fatuous, wrong, erroneous in reasoning, lacking in scientific credibility, and out of date. He also says that it "doesn't reflect any prevailing scientific consensus", though it has to be said that on speculative matters like cosmology the "scientific consensus" is as fluid as fashion in popular music. Curiously, Brookesmith does not challenge the assumption that single-celled life may form readily, though as already noted, this is one of the weakest parts of the pro-ETH case, since its occurrence on Earth is totally inexplicable.

Swords makes one definite error when he says: "The way in which planets are arrayed within such [solar] systems is thought to be of a standard pattern: small rocky terrestrials near the star and large solid-cored gas balls farther out." Evidently this was once "thought" solely because it is the case with our own solar system, but it is not true of most of the other systems recently found, and of course his opponent jumps on this.

In 1994 George Wetherill had proposed that after the formation of the planets Jupiter acted as a "sling shot", sending most of the comets out into the Oort cloud, whence they only approach the Sun very rarely. If our system had had no Jupiter, he calculated, then comet impacts would be a thousand times more common, a continual bombardment that would have wiped out any complex life. At that time, no Jupiter-sized planet had been detected elsewhere, and a mathematical model of planet formation suggested that gas giants would be very rare; hence, he argued, so would complex life. (5) Less than two years after his theory was published, the first gas giant was found circling another star, to be followed by many others. This is a cautionary example of how hypotheses in this field are routinely disproved by new findings.

Brookesmith nonetheless cites Wetherill's work as significant, by assuming that inner gas giants (several of which are now known) would not have the same effect as outer ones; he fails to mention that inner gas giants are the easiest planets to detect by the Doppler wobble method, so that other types of planet may be commoner than they currently appear. Moreover, he seems to be

advocating a different theory altogether from Wetherill's, (6) that Jupiter acts as a "guardian" that "attracts incoming objects that might otherwise smash into the Earth", instancing comet Shoemaker-Levy. Now, obviously, not every comet collides with Jupiter, since there are still plenty of comets around. The most it could do is to catch them one at a time, so that now, after billions of years, there are far fewer than there would otherwise have been. But, since most comets have orbits that take them close to the Sun, an inner gas giant would actually be more effective than an outer one in doing this, since there would be more likelihood of colliding with a planet in a smaller orbit.

Moreover, there are various theories about how comet impacts link to evolution. It is agreed that mass extinctions, such as that which occurred at the end of the Cretaceous era, were caused by the impact of a huge comet or meteorite. Yet, although up to 80 per cent of known species were annihilated by these events, on each occasion a whole new ecosystem sprang up almost at once: so that there is no reason to think that such catastrophes may be fatal to life as a whole. Brookesmith himself says: "At the same time, we are here because some cometary impacts have evaded our giant gatekeeper, resetting the evolutionary clock on various occasions and in ways no one could have predicted." This is a case of having it both ways. Jupiter protects us from comets, which is why we've survived; but it *doesn't* protect us from every comet, which is why we evolved. One could as well argue on this basis that, were it not for Jupiter, life would have evolved much faster.

Other cosmological theories give a positive role to celestial bombardment. Hoyle and Wickramasinghe have proposed that life originated in space and was brought to earth by comets and meteorites. (7) Recently, Berkeley scientists studying the Moon concluded that impacts became far more common on its surface in the past 400 million years. Probably they would also then have become more common on the Earth, from which they suggest that somehow this stimulated evolution, though this would be more plausible if the crash frequency increase had coincided with the Cambrian explo-

sion. (8)

How valuable these theories are may perhaps be judged by the data on Jupiter transmitted by the Galileo probe, which was totally different to what had been expected. Brookesmith comments on this: "If planets in our solar system refuse to conform to theoretical prediction, we can place no faith in smug predictions about the nature of satellites in other systems." Quite so, but why then, we may ask, does Brookesmith feel confident in making smug predictions about the rarity of intelligent life?

Brookesmith also makes the misleading statement that the Earth is "placed at just the right distance from the Sun to maintain water in its liquid state". Actually, distance from its star is only one factor determining a planet's temperature. Venus is much hotter than the Earth, not only because it is closer to the Sun, but due to its clouds creating a strong "greenhouse effect", and, possibly, its intense volcanic activity. There is in fact quite a wide band in which a planet *might* have an Earth-like temperature.

Another key point of Brookesmith's argument concerns the Moon, which on the basis of the currently fashionable "big splash" theory of lunar origins he reckons to be an astronomical rarity. He goes on to say that it has played a key role in evolution, since "It is the Moon's gravity that tilts the Earth, creating the seasons". This can hardly be correct, since Mars, which has no large moon, has almost the same axial tilt as the Earth. (in any case, it is merely speculation that the seasons were vital for the evolution of complexity.) Moreover, he thinks, the Moon's gravity "creates the ebb and flow of tides, so that animals living in coastal waters were subject to yet more evolutionary pressure. Those who *could* not survive being stranded by the ebb tide died off." This would not have happened, he avers, but for the Moon.



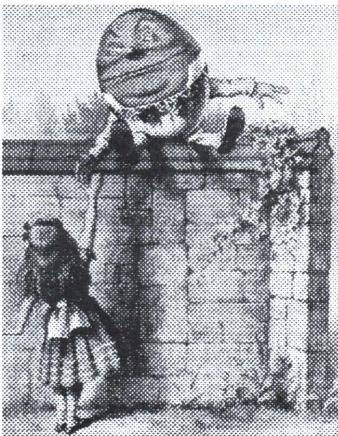
Now, as every schoolchild knows, both the Sun and Moon exert a tidal pull, the Moon's being slightly more than twice that of the Sun. Spring tides occur when the two coincide, neap tides when they partly cancel out. So, if there were no Moon, there would still be tides, nearly as great as neap tides, caused by the Sun.

But do tides matter anyway? Passing over the usual tautology of evolution theory ("Those who could not survive ... died off") I notice that jellyfish are often stranded by ebb tides and die. Yet whilst the tides kill the individual, as a class they have flourished for at least 600 million years.

The popular equation of evolution with progress has recently been subject to heavy criticism. Zen Faulkes, a contributor to the Prometheus Books study The UFO Invasion, argues that: Evolutionary theory does not predict that there should be any trend to increasing intelligence. For that matter, evolutionary theory does not predict any trend toward any sort of increasing complexity ... when one considers that the anomalocaridids were Cambrian-era predators with well-developed eyes, raptorial appendages, and reaching two meters in length ... one is hard-pressed to argue how such an animal would be "simpler" than the vast majority of animals alive today." (9) In the same way, Brookesmith invokes Stephen Jay Gould for the conclusion that there is in fact "a slight overall tendency toward simplification".

I don't know if you can make any sense of that, for I confess that I cannot. If there is no tendency for life to become complex, then how did complexity ever arise in the first place? If there is no tendency towards increased intelligence, then why did intelligence increase? Possibly what they mean is that, under normal circumstances, life should not become complex or intelligent, so that it must have done so on Earth by the veriest chance. If so,

1. "Where Are They?", *Scientific American*, July 2000
2. Walter Sullivan, *We Are Not Alone*, Pelican, 1970, p. 280
3. Michael D. Swords, "Extraterrestrial Hypothesis and Science", in Jerome Clark, *The UFO Book*, Visible Ink, Detroit, Michigan, 1998, p. 191
4. *Fortean Times*, 134, 135, 136, May-July 2000
5. *Astrophysics and Space Science*, 212, 1994; also *Nature*, 373, 1995
6. Though he nevertheless cites Wetherill as his authority. He also quotes Geoffrey Marcy of California State University, but does not state Marcy's (unproven) theory, that inner gas giants must have started as outer gas giants in decaying orbits, and would have eaten up earthlike planets on their path towards the Sun. See *Washington Post*, 15 February 1999, A3
7. Fred Hoyle & N.C. Wickramasinghe, *Lifecloud*, Sphere, 1979
8. *Science*, 10 March 2000
9. Kendrick Frazier, Barry Karr & Joe Nickell, *The UFO Invasion*, Prometheus Books, Buffalo, New York, 1997, pp. 306, 308



then what they are effectively saying is, theory and facts do not agree, so reject the facts as anomalous, and stick to the theory.

Faulkes also writes that "nobody has yet to provide any reliable evidence that those lineages that squeaked through episodes of mass extinction were any more complex or "better adapted" than those that died". Other biologists echo this, suggesting that Darwin's hypothesis of natural selection through survival of the fittest has been tacitly abandoned (though no doubt if a Biblical Creationist pointed this out they would deny it). But this leaves us without any theory of the origin of species, so that these people are pontificating on the probability of events that actually they can't explain at all.

Brookesmith also points to the large amount of randomness that has evidently taken place in the survival and development of species, citing in particular Stephen Budiansky's "The Improbability of the Horse". I suspect that this may be a misleading use of the word "improbability". Every one of us is the result of a genetic lottery at conception, of which there were millions of possible outcomes. So the odds are millions to one against you existing. But, of course, that does not mean that you only came into being as a result of some staggering cosmic coincidence. In the same way, the odds may be incredibly against the exact sequence of life that has occurred, but in itself that does not prove that the probabilities are against *something similar* having happened.

One thing that is established, from the fossil record, is the general increase in brain size over millions of years, at least in some vertebrates. Tertiary mammals tended to have bigger brains than Mesozoic dinosaurs, and modern humans have bigger brains than earlier humans did. We may not know the cause of this, but it is a fact.

Here we come up against the problem that, given the incredible complexity of life, the reasons why these complexities evolved must be even more difficult to understand. Evolutionists, however, tend to offer very simplistic explanations. This is what Swords does here: "intelligence is one of the most powerful survival characteristics employable in the

struggle for existence." Consider, again, jellyfish, which have no brain at all, yet have proved adepts at survival. Incidentally, brain size does not directly correlate with intelligence. Certainly, large brains do not seem to have proved much of an asset to people who write about the probability of intelligent life.

Part of the trouble arises from a refusal to admit that biology is not generally an exact science in the way that physics and chemistry are. What we find in the fossil record is a fact, but the reasons suggested why those events occurred are often only guesses. For instance, the "punctuated evolution" hypothesis, that missing links existed for too short a time to leave fossil remains, is by its nature untestable, hence not, strictly, scientific.

However, I think that the deepest issue here is not about science at all. Brookesmith accuses Swords of having "a core of religious faith", implying that this is something to be despised. Whatever the official position may now be on natural selection, biologists still hold fast to Darwinism because it "has no place for a divine guiding hand. But Swords's complaint should apply equally to particle physics, organic chemistry, geology, astronomy, or any other scientific discipline deserving the name, as no science reserves such a driving seat for the Almighty."

Actually, the physical sciences are rooted in the notion of a structured universe that obeys precise laws - even unpredictability, in quantum physics, follows exact rules. Science does indeed have no place in it for the divine, because science deals with "efficient" (immediate) causes, not with "final" causes, into which category the question of whether or not the universe has a purpose falls. Science is impotent in the face of the ultimate issues.

Because of this, it may be noted, some possibilities are never discussed. If Einstein was right when he said "God does not play dice", then events that we think are random actually have a cause currently unknown to us. Einstein was talking about microscopic interactions, but far all we know the remark might apply to the cosmos as a whole.

The "intelligence is common" school often invoke the "Principle of Mediocrity", that we

do not occupy any particularly special position in the universe. This is a philosophical guideline, often useful in astronomy, but not an unbreakable rule. If planets with intelligent life are very rare, we would have to be on one of those privileged places to be able to debate the question at all.

On the other side is what one might term the "Egotistical Principle", that humans have one of the most honoured places in the scheme of things. In the old days, when the Earth was thought to be the centre of a universe perhaps only a few thousand miles across, and before random forces had been set up in the place of deity, it was accepted that everything was created for the benefit of man, who was made in the image of God, woman being a second-rate imitation. No one suggested, though the position would have been equally sustainable, that the world existed for the sake of, say, locusts, and that the function of humans was merely to cultivate crops, so that the locusts could eat them.

Nowadays things are contrariwise: the universe is vast, and presumed to be random. To keep up our special position it has to be assumed that the planet Earth is one of the few places, preferably the only place, where intelligent life has happened to arise. Of course, this motive is never admitted aloud.

If we prove to be alone in this vast universe, then we will be more ready to admit ourselves to be a mere product of chance. Conversely, if life on other planets is very common or even, as abduction literature suggests, so similar to that on Earth that ETs can interbreed with us or create hybrids - we may well conclude that the universe is not an accident after all. So the existence or otherwise of extraterrestrial life may be the ultimate litmus of the materialist and religious viewpoints. This may explain why so many people are trying to jump the gun and answer the question before they have the evidence.

That said, everyone in this debate is suffering from the same basic flaw in approach, that they present unproven speculations as if they were proven facts. The real motive, on both sides, is to avoid those most embarrassing words: "I don't know".

# AN ALIEN VICE

## HUMAN SEXUALITY AND THE PORNOGRAPHY OF ABDUCTION

DAVID SIVIER

**The following essay is an attempt to establish the parallel role and content of the abduction narrative and pornography. By this I do not mean that the numerous books, articles and documentaries allegedly reporting the true abduction and sexual abuse of humans by extraterrestrial beings are deliberately written to provoke sexual arousal. Indeed, I sincerely hope this is not the case. Nevertheless, like pornography it is a literature with a strong sexual content, using many of its themes and motifs, originating squarely to address human psychological needs and fulfilling some of its social functions.**

THE EXPLICITLY SEXUAL elements of the abduction phenomenon also have more than a whiff of obscenity. Not only are they repellent, but, by encouraging the more impressionable of their readers to believe that they could be the victims of similar assault by aliens, it could be argued that it depraves or corrupts. Perhaps this is too strong. There are, mercifully, no examples yet of someone citing it in court as encouraging the perpetration of sex offences. Nevertheless, the number of abductees who read this type of material before experiencing abductions of their own, including, *inter alia*, Whitley Strieber, strongly suggests that it is potentially highly dangerous for a certain type of vulnerable mind. Even if not technically obscene within the accepted legal definition of the term, its detrimental effects on certain individual's mental health may strike some as an indication of obscenity within the broader sense of the term, as literary material 'intended to shock or disgust.'

1

The essay also tends to consider the abduction narrative largely in terms of female sexuality and pornography. This is not an attempt to be sexist or exploitative. Although the most notorious abduction case after the Hill's was that of Antonio Villas-Boas, which undoubtedly informed and influenced the course of later abduction fantasies, most abductees are women. There are male abductees, of course, and there is much male pornography which describes scenes of passive rape, or maso-

chistic abuse by a strong, sexual aggressive woman. The sheer preponderance of women in the abductee underground, however, suggests something profound and deeply disturbing about female sexuality and gender relations and roles in modern society.

Finally, if investigating pornography in the context of alien abductions appears morally dubious, or inappropriate, consider Gershon Legman's comments on sexual folklore: 'Sexual folklore ... concerns some of the most pressing fears and most destructive life problems of the people who tell the jokes and sing the songs ... They are projecting the endemic sexual fears, and problems and defeats of their culture ... And they are almost always expressing their resistance to authority figures, such as parents, priests and policemen, in stereotyped forms of sexual satisfaction and scatological pranks and vocabulary.'<sup>2</sup> Legman is describing the intentionally humorous quality of most bawdy traditional material, but this description does fit the abduction narrative, with, of course, the exception that there is precious little intentionally funny about alien abductions.

To the sceptic, the most repellent feature of the classic abduction narrative is its strong similarity to certain forms of sado-masochistic pornography, especially in the accounts of the alleged abduction and sexual abuse of children. Indeed, '(s)ome of these accounts, if separated from the context of a purported real event, could be mistaken for paedophile fantasies of sexual torture,

The group of male Venusians who walked stark naked out of Buck Nelson's barn told him they did so to reassure him they were just like him. They then departed in their flying saucer, but did not attempt to persuade Nelson to go with him, or otherwise do anything which would elicit the interest of Budd Hopkins

and regardless of whether or not these accounts have any basis in reality, it is clear that a number of publishers and magazine editors think there is nothing wrong in publishing detailed accounts of violent sexual assaults on children.<sup>3</sup> To this the standard reply of many abductionists is that the scenario is too fantastic, too horrific, to be the product of human imagination or fantasy. It's an assertion which is easily countered. Not only can the technological and exobiological imagery of the abduction narrative be linked to that of science fiction, but the central motif of gynaecological or andrological examination and sexual abuse can also be cleared proven to have its own connections to the murky world of contemporary pornography. Abduction scenarios closely resemble women's pornography, from the soft-core rape fantasies of bodice busters to the masturbation fantasies recounted by writers like Shere Hite or Nancy Friday. Many of Nancy Friday's stories from the 1970s even have similar imagery of gynecological examinations with faintly masochistic overtones, often with occult or medical details.<sup>4</sup> Apart from the better known accounts of abuse by the aliens themselves, many of the abduction narratives also contain episodes in which the percipient is raped, or forced to have sex with, another apparently "switched-off" human being.<sup>5</sup>

Regardless of David Jacobs' comments that "This is not a sexual fantasy situation, most men and women feel that it is an uncontrollable and traumatic event,"<sup>6</sup> it does have strong parallels in some people's sexual fantasies. As an illustration of the pseudo-medical, masochistic nature of many of the fantasies recounted by Friday, in her encyclopaedic collection of such material, *My Secret Garden*, she includes one woman's fantasy of being displayed for the erotic satisfaction of a football crowd while strapped to a dentist's couch. She is then wheeled into another room where her ex-

husband does have sex with her, but shows no emotion whilst doing so. The parallels to the abduction narrative are immediate and striking. First of all there is the pseudo-medical nature of the encounter itself - a surgical table in the abduction narrative, and the dentist's chair in the fantasy, the passive, physically restrained role of the female percipient, and the unemotional, impassive demeanour of the man, or alien who finally copulates with her. Of course, there are also important differences. The most important is that the fantasy recounted by Friday is presumably that of a healthy woman who felt largely in control of her life and imagination, whilst the abduction scenario is perceived and recounted by individuals who feel themselves totally humiliated and helpless before their alien or human tormentors. Outside the abduction milieu, much of the pornography now written for women consists of stories of sexual abuse or degradation. *The Captive*, one of the overheated works published by Silver Mink, a publisher of 'erotica' for women, is explicit in the particular form of the sexuality within its pages, both in its title and cover illustration of a naked woman bent over in some kind of stocks. A disturbing amount of female pornography allegedly contains incest motifs, to the point where it has been somewhat cynically said, "(I)ncest has also become the standard plot twist in women's pulp fiction". Reviewing the latest batch of Black Lace offerings - pornography for women - Maureen Feely notes that "the deep, dark secret that you have to plow (sic) through hundreds of pages to discover is always - but always - what the blurb writers like to call 'society's last taboo.' So it's not much of a surprise any more."<sup>7</sup> A few years ago, the Femail section of the *Daily Mail* ran an article on how women betrayed themselves through such pornography took the publishers to task for encouraging, at least psychologically, their sex-

ual abuse.

At first glance, this is strange, even perverse. Over the past thirty years society has made a determined effort to stamp out sexual abuse and give women greater control, not less, in their personal, professional and sexual relationships, a situation which has found its counterpart in much male pornography. A sizable chunk of the male sexual underground revolves around their abuse and subjugation before whip-wielding dominatrices, to the point where that image has arguably become the standard, uncontested symbol of forbidden pleasures - at least those pleasures which society chooses not to ban, but place on the top shelves of bookstores and the seedier type of newsagent. It's therefore extremely problematic why contemporary women, enjoying more freedom than previous generations, should generate and consume fantasies of their abuse and domination. The link between such pornography and the abduction experience clearly points to a deeper psychological phenomenon, one that requires greater investigation than it has hitherto received.

Although pseudo-medical examinations appear to have been an element of the UFO phenomenon almost from the very beginning, like that experienced by Harold Chibbett's female hypnotic subject in her 1947 psychic voyage to Mars,<sup>8</sup> by comparison with today's fraught abductee panic the contactee era is remarkably lacking, or benign, in its sexual content. Samuel Estes Thompson may have been lectured on reincarnation, vegetarianism and other mystical topics by a UFO crewed by naked male Venusians, but apart from favouring him with their religious opinions they made no attempt to assault him. Similarly, the group of male Venusians who walked stark naked out of Buck Nelson's barn told him they did so to reassure him they were just like him. They then departed in their flying saucer, but did not attempt to persuade Nelson to go with

him, or otherwise do anything which would elicit the interest of Budd Hopkins. Mr G.B. may similarly have been abducted while walking along the North Canal in Marseille by tall, slender beings dressed in diving suits, but apart from sitting, weeping in their spacecraft before being allowed to leave, nothing happened to him. No medical examination, extraction of sperm or any of the other fetishistic favourites of the contemporary abduction narrative. Clearly something changed between the heyday of the contactee - the late forties and early fifties - and the onset of the modern abduction hysteria in the late seventies. The question is just what.

Possibly the lack of explicitly sexual elements within the close encounter experiences of the later forties and fifties stems from the repressed nature of contemporary society. The Lord Chamberlain's office continued to censor stage material of an explicitly sexual nature until the late sixties, and literature was subject to much the same extensive strictures. As a result, much of the material from that period which caused a furor because of its supposedly dangerous sexual nature now seems remarkably tame, even inoffensive. The early attempts at cinematic pornography, at least in Britain, tended to be salacious exposés of life in nudist camps, featuring nothing more shocking than naked people, usually women, running around playing volleyball or tennis. Rape, homosexuality and paedophilia were taboo subjects, and simply not discussed. Many members of the older generation can remember how they were in their late teens or even early twenties before learning incredulously that homosexuals existed. One female journalist for the *Observer* wrote at the tail end of the '80s that women and children were probably no more at risk today from sexual assault than they were during her childhood in the fifties. The difference was that people were now far more aware of the

possibility of sexual assault, and responded by curtailing their children's freedom, restricting them to places where they could be safely watched instead of allowing them to wander abroad as in previous decades.

Within Ufology, the key episodes introducing the motifs of medical examination and sexual contact were the abductions of Betty and Barney Hill and Villas-Boas, while the turning points for the milieu as a whole were the assassination of JFK and Watergate. Under the impact of these traumatic events, the ufological narrative turned from one of benign contact with omniscient, compassionate Space Brothers, albeit with rumours of government cover-ups, to the Darkside scenario of rape and abuse by callous, indifferent monsters with the express collusion of the civil and military administration. This occurred, however, at a time of rapid change in western sexual mores which sought to establish a more tolerant, liberal attitude towards sex. The result was the gradual establishment of pre-marital sex as the norm, rather than a dangerously aberrant form of delinquency, the legalisation of homosexuality, gradual relaxation of censorship permitting a more explicit depiction and discussion of sexual issues, and the appearance of an increasingly tedious variety of pornographic magazines, beginning with *Playboy*. Of course, most of this pornography was aimed squarely at a male readership, but women weren't far behind. Hugh Hefner launched a companion magazine for women, *Playgirl*, while *Cosmopolitan* in the 1970s carried a series of nude male centrefolds for their female readers. Unlike its male counterpart, female pornography has met with mixed success. *Playgirl* eventually folded through lack of interest, and the author is reliably informed by his female friends that *Cosmopolitan* no longer carries its centrefolds. The attempts of tabloid newspapers like the *Sun* and *Star*

to introduce a 'page seven fellas' for their female readers have similarly vanished without a trace. These attempts have had an effect though. There have been more recent attempts to launch further pornographic magazines for women, including one with just that as its title, and glossy magazines like *Cosmopolitan*, and their counterparts in the 'lad mags' usual have at least one article per issue on sensational sex tips along with photographs of scantily clad members of the opposite sex.

This drive towards a more sexually tolerant, even indulgent society has not gone unchallenged, however. Despite its legalisation in 1969, many people are still deeply uneasy about the acceptance of homosexuality to the point where Clause 28 and its legalisation in the armed forces are heavily contested, emotive issues. Mary Whitehouse's Viewers and Listeners' Association was instrumental in challenging much sexually explicit material in broadcasting, and the religious Right, particularly in America but also elsewhere in the world, regularly condemns such liberal sexual attitudes as an assault on decency and pure family values. Nor are they alone. Elements of the feminist left have also attacked sexual permissiveness and liberalism, after initially supporting it, because of the way in which it is felt it has been used to exploit and violate women, rather than benefit them. These ideas carried a greater urgency after the feminist campaigns in the 70s against rape and domestic violence in which some of the most vociferous protagonists in the debate claimed vastly inflated statistics for instances of child abuse and saw dangerous subtexts of domination and abuse in nearly all forms of heterosexual contact. Furthermore, the advent of AIDS in the early 80s provided a strong link between sex and disease paralleling the social panic surrounding syphilis in the *fin de siècle* of the 19th century.

This darkening of social atti-

tudes to sex is reflected in the content of the contemporary media. The early British attempts at pornography were either the inane and prurient documentaries about nudist camps, or else comedies in which the hapless hero found himself the object of uncontrolled female desire. More recent films and literature have stressed the darker elements of human sexuality, usually with a subtext of domination, subordination, control or death. For example, *9½ Weeks* contained strong sado-masochistic imagery while *The Silence of the Lambs* contained particularly shocking and disgusting images of sexual aberration. At the level of popular literature, the Batman comic strip, particularly in the *Dark Knight* and *Arkham Asylum* graphic novels, stressed the aberrant, dysfunctional, even schizophrenic nature of the Batman himself, and hinted strongly at a sado-masochistic and even homosexual undercurrent to the character. The result has been the transformation of society's view of sex, from something fundamentally healthy and natural, to a dark, obsessive force driving people towards increasingly bizarre forbidden pleasures. The uncomplicated hedonism of the Playboy Clubs has been replaced by the bizarre, violent and transgressive sexuality of the fetish milieu.

This increasingly dark view of human sexual relations has its reflection in the tortured imagery of alien abductions. All fantasy, whether pornography or innocent day-dreaming, is an attempt by the human psyche to obtain experiences which would be otherwise impossible in reality. This naturally includes scenarios which the reader or dreamer would find repulsive or otherwise unpleasant in real life. War films are, for example, perennially popular at the cinema, but few people would willingly choose to experience the full horror of armed conflict, and those that do may well have compensatory fantasies of a quiet life of office work. The abduction fantasy has arisen to address deep, if obscure, human social, psychological and spiritual needs, just as pornography addresses the deepest, most basic drive of the human psyche. It should not be surprising that the imagery of one carries over into the other.

The content of much abduction material - the dehumanising medi-

1. Thompson, R., *Unfit For Modest Ears: A Study of Pornographic, Obscene and Bowdy Works Written or Published in England in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century*, MacMillan, 1979, preface.

2. Legman, G., *The Horn Book*, New Hyde Park, 1964, pp. 245-6, quoted in Thompson, R., op. cit., p. 13.

3. McClure, K., 'Bogeymen', *Magonia* no. 55, p. 4.

4. Showalter, E., *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture*, Picador, 1997, p. 196.

5. See J. and A. Spencer, *True Life Encounters: Alien Contact*, Millenium, 1997, p. 148.

6. Ibid, p. 148.

7. Freely, M., 'Blowing Hot and Hotter', *The Observer Review*, July 16, 1995, p. 12, quoted in Showalter, E., op. cit., p. 91.

8. Rogerson, P., 'Fairyland's Hunters: Notes towards a Revisionist History of Abductions', in *Magonia* 56, p. 4.

9. Showalter, op. cit., p. 196.

cal examination and rape - shows a deeply ambivalent, even hostile attitude to sex, an attitude which is shared by the incest survivors' milieu. 'Although some women who tell Jacobs and Bryan their stories belong to puritanical religious groups or are celibate, this imagery is a normal part of women's sexual fantasies. The abductees, however, seem particularly uneasy about sex ... these desires for touch, gazing, penetration have to come from very far away, even outer space.' (9) Ellen Bass and Laura Davis' influential book, *The Courage to Heal*, a popular guidebook aimed at the female survivors of incest, contains a checklist of 78 effects of sexual abuse, and explicitly asks its readers whether they are aroused by fantasies of violence, sadism or incest. 'The assumption that sexual fantasies are improper, incorrect, sick, is at the heart of the recovered memory phenomenon. Many women feel they must disown these fantasies, and blame them on something or someone else.' (10) In the science fictional post-space age, this something or someone else naturally includes aliens or creatures from parallel worlds.

This extreme discomfort about sex may also explain the masochistic elements within the abduction experience. Most human cultures, even those which have struck westerners as being remarkably open and tolerant about sexuality, have strong taboos and prohibitions regarding sex. Strong feelings of guilt and shame, including, naturally, those surrounding sex may, in turn, take on a particular sexual form. 'Moral masochism is regarded as an important form, being linked with an unconscious sense of guilt, with a paramount need for suffering.' (11) At least one contemporary sex manual suggests that some women's desire to be spanked during sex possibly comes from subconscious guilt about the act and childish feelings that they are somehow being naughty and need to be punished. Needless to say, such feelings are by no means confined to women, as the scandals which continue to erupt over those prominent literary and political figures who choose to indulge themselves in *le vice Anglaise* demonstrate. From this point of view, however, the abduction experience appears to be an extremely unpleasant fantasy

experienced by those who are brutally alienated from their own sexuality and feel that they must suffer for, and within their pleasures.

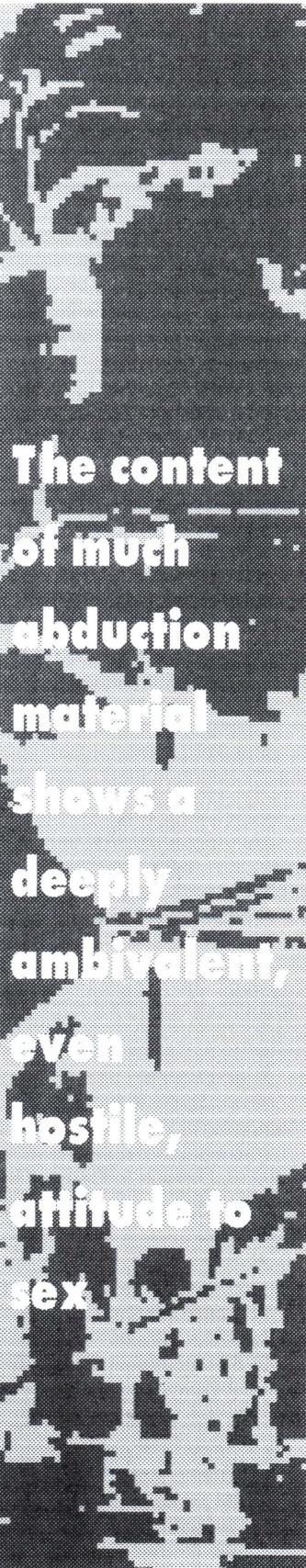
The pseudo-medical content of the abduction narrative is also easily explained within the context of pornography or romantic fantasy. Members of both sexes may fantasise about erotic liaisons with their doctors or nurses as an extension of much romantic material. Mills and Boon, who for decades have been synonymous with harmless romantic escapism, have had as their stock in trade an almost unceasing catalogue of hospital dramas. Such material has also provided the plots of much television medical drama, and girls' comics. Every now and then, one of the more popular tabloids announces that doctors are the favourite subjects of women's sexual fantasies, while some men on the other hand fantasise about nurses. There is even a technical term, *iatromedia*, for a woman's desire to expose herself to her doctor. Since the seventeenth century, an awful amount of pornography has been published masquerading as medical texts.

The reasons for this aren't hard to find. Members of the medical profession enjoy a uniquely privileged access to their patients' bodies and minds in their professional role and it is only natural that some individuals should thus respond by making such intimately caring figures the object of fantasy. Adolescents are, at least in the mythology surrounding childhood, which amongst other things, stipulates that 'schooldays are the happiest days of your life', supposed to acquire sexual knowledge and awareness through games of doctors and nurses with members of the opposite sex. In psychiatry, both Freud and his predecessor Breuer noted the strong tendency of their women patients to fall in love with them. Freud eventually concluded that this was a result of their displaced incestuous feelings for their fathers, although possibly a better explanation was that Freud and Breuer, to particularly neurotic members of the stiflingly bourgeois Viennese upper-middle class, represented caring, omniscient male authority figures to whom their patients could confide their deepest problems and desires, and therefore suitable subjects for

their affections. Sadly, as recent scandals have also shown, many doctors are all-too willing to exploit this intimacy with their patients and abuse them sexually. This new element of fear and sexual suspicion in an essential relationship of trust is undoubtedly responsible for the humiliating nature of the medical examinations recounted in the abduction narrative, and the overt motifs of rape and abuse which permeate the abduction experience as a whole.

Central to much female pornography, and certain abduction narratives, is the heroine's sexual subjugation by a dominating, charismatic male authority figure. One of the directors or leading writers for Mills and Boon stated on the chat show Wogan over a decade ago now that the most important element in any romance was the hero, who should be an 'alpha male' - strong, ambitious and competitive. This may explain the appearance of the Tall Grey Being in the abduction narratives collected, or suggested, by Jacobs. The featureless Greys, almost devoid of individual identity may represent fears of the loss of individuality before the collective, but as a narrative device they are psychologically unsatisfying. *Star Trek* found this out when they were forced to introduce the character of the Borg Queen despite the undifferentiated, collective nature of the fictional Borg society. For the characters to interact satisfactorily with their enemies, the Borg had to have a personal, individual representative. In the abduction narrative, the equally characterless, undifferentiated Greys are joined by the Tall Grey Being whom 'many female abductees intuitively feel is male, a doctor, and an authority figure ... gazing deep into her (the victim's) eyes like an extraterrestrial Heathcliff or Fabio, filling her with love and eagerness to give herself completely'. (12) This strongly suggest that at the root of the abduction phenomenon is a distorted, perverted medicalised sexual fantasy, which as a matter of course must include submission before an authoritative and caring medical alpha male.

Evolutionary psychology suggests such men have an attraction for women because of the advantages they offer them and their children as strong protectors and providers. The negative aspect to



this is that there are women who are attracted to violent, domineering men. It is unfortunately a sad fact that such women tend to move from one such bully to another and may even block and frustrate action taken by the police or social services on their behalf by taking their lover's side. There is absolutely no need to claim, as Eve Frances Lorgen in her 'Alien Love Bite' article for MUFON has done, that the tortured, abusive relationships of many abductees have their origin in their rape and abuse by aliens.<sup>13</sup> It is too close, too similar, to the experiences of the victims of real human abuse on Earth to be coincidental. Its origins lie instead in the brutalised psychology of abused and dysfunctional individuals, rather than in putative invaders from the stars.

Then there is the question surrounding the abduction scenario itself. Why should apparently healthy individuals fantasize about such a traumatic event? While the apparent scenario of intergalactic explorers gathering and examining specimens from Earth lends itself to themes of abduction and medical examination, there are other forms the contact narrative could take. Real interstellar explorers would be more likely to recover and dissect a recently deceased corpse, like the human explorers in Gregory Benford's SF novel *Across the Sea of Suns*, or break into the anatomy facilities of university medical departments or teaching hospitals. As a sexual fantasy, there's similarly little apparent need for such abusive, violent imagery. That great ufological pretender, George Adamski, met a number of vivacious extraterrestrial women on his interplanetary travels and even as late as 1975 Elizabeth Klärer could recount her intimate relationship with an alien spaceship captain. Nor is Klärer an isolated example of a consenting, romantic relationship between human and alien. At roughly the same time Marvel was running a short-lived strip based firmly on the then emergent mythology of alien abduction and hybridisation, it was also publishing Starlord, a superhero comic whose main character was the half-human child of an Earth woman and a crashed alien starship captain.

These benign fantasies, however, are far outnumbered by the countless films, short stories and novels about alien invaders de-

scending to carry off human females, and occasionally males, for nefarious breeding purposes. Of course, rape as one of the most horrific forms of human violence exerts a powerful fascination for the human psyche. It can be depended on to sell newspapers and 'true crime' books, magazines and television series. Part of its fascination stems from disgust and a desire to protect and avenge the traditionally most vulnerable part of the population. There is, however, a strongly atavistic element to these fears.

Marriage in many technologically primitive societies is frequently by abduction. The americans of Tierra de Fuego sought their wives in this way. Although many such cultures now have elaborate rules concerning betrothal and courtship, among the Kagora and Kadara tribes of northern Nigeria, for example, '(a)ll secondary marriages begin with wife abduction'.<sup>14</sup> Nor are they isolated examples. Similar abductions of women for wives also occurred in First Nation North American, Celtic, Papuan and the earliest formative period of the Graeco-Roman cultures of antiquity, to name but a few. Although western concepts of warfare no longer encompass the abduction of women for marriage, tragically rape and the sexual abuse of the female, and sometimes male population occurs with disgusting regularity amongst the world's armed conflicts. In the relatively stable West which has not experienced war for over fifty years, the abduction phenomenon may express deep fears of the forcible appropriation of the tribal gene pool by an aggressive other produced through millenia of tribal and personal competition for women.

The victims of these abductions, following Herodotus' claim that 'no young woman allows herself to be abducted if she does not wish to be'<sup>15</sup> - a statement apparently on a par with some of the idiotic comments about rape by the more senile judges - are not necessarily merely passive victims. In Ona Fuegian society, for example, 'it was not considered proper for a new wife, whether a young girl or mature woman, to give herself away too cheaply. On the contrary, she would frequently put up a good fight and, on his next appearance, the bridegroom might

have badly scratched face and maybe a black eye as well.'<sup>16</sup> Despite risking a beating or worse from their new husbands, abducted wives 'were wooed and made much of, to prevent them from running away',<sup>17</sup> which, as Bridges himself noted in *Tierra del Fuego*, many did. If the abduction phenomenon represents a fantastical expression of deep human fears of tribal raiding for wives, then its incorporation into female sexual fantasies may represent a kind of sexual Stockholm syndrome, in which those abducted women remaining with their new husbands saved themselves from further violence at the hands of their abductors by developing feelings of love for them. It may also be a female response to the curious mixture of violence and genuine love in this particular form of male sexuality. This process is clearly exemplified in Ann Carol Ulrich's novel, *Intimate Abduction*, advertised in the August/September 1991 issue of *UFO Universe* under the by line 'What happens when you fall in love with your abductor?'<sup>18</sup> It's possible that this is one of the dafter and more dangerous popularisations of the abduction phenomenon, but I doubt it. There's so much other obnoxious trash to choose from.

Another point to be made regarding the abusive content of the abduction is that a large proportion of romantic fantasies feature women as victims. Whether these are the classic formulae of adventure stories, in which the hero must rescue the heroine from the vile schemes of her enemies, or the heroines of 'weepies' like *Love Story*, who as often as not die young, the tragic heroines of classic romance are nearly all victims. There may be a biological component to this. There is evidence to suggest that women are neurologically more inclined to depression than men, just as there is evidence that women are more prone to UFO abductions and demonic experiences because of the greater development of the left hemisphere in the female brain.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the lower status traditionally afforded to women, the relatively limited career and educational opportunities offered to them, and social conventions that emphasize emotional display may constitute concrete social influences creating the greater inci-

<sup>10.</sup> Showalter, op. cit. p. 150.

<sup>11.</sup> 'Masochism', in Paxton, J., ed., *The New Illustrated Everyman's Encyclopedia*, Octopus Books, 1985, volume 2, p. 1040.

<sup>12.</sup> Showalter, E., op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>13.</sup> See Lorgen, E.F., *The Alien Love Bite*, January 1999, cited in McClure, K., 'Dark Ages', in *Fortean Times* no. 129, p. 31.

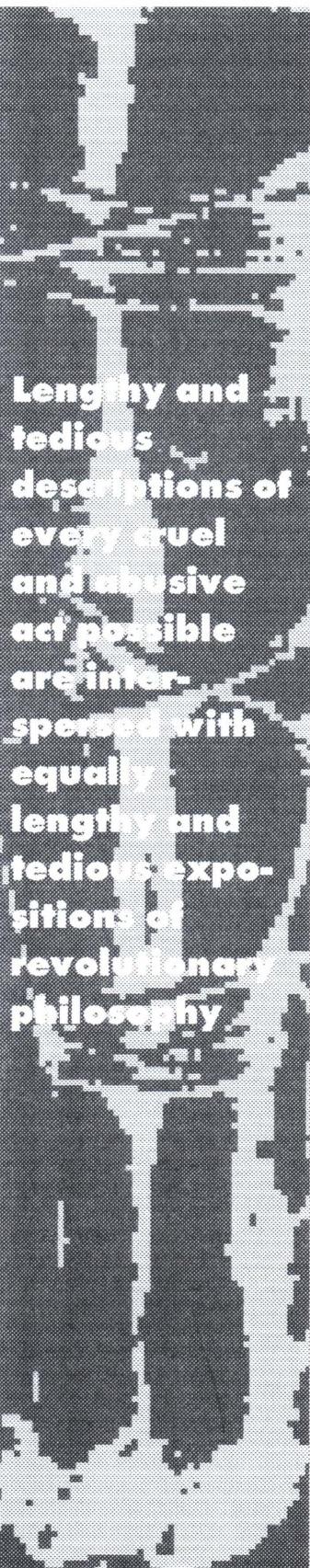
<sup>14.</sup> Smith, M.G., 'Differentiation and the Segmentary Principle', in Douglas, M., and Kaberry, P.M., *Man in Africa*, Tavistock Publications, 1969, p. 154.

<sup>15.</sup> de Selincourt, A., trans, Burn, A.R., ed., Herodotus, *The Histories*, Penguin Books, 1972, p. 42.

<sup>16.</sup> Bridges, L. *Uttermost Part of the Earth*, Century, 1948, p. 359.

<sup>17.</sup> Bridges, op. cit., p. 223.

<sup>18.</sup> Beckley, T.G., ed., *UFO Universe*, vol. 1, no. 4., p. 63.



**Lengthy and tedious descriptions of every cruel and abusive act possible are interspersed with equally lengthy and tedious expositions of revolutionary philosophy**

dence of depression amongst women. Regardless of the precise social or biological reasons, it is clear that some women do feel they can only achieve attention, dignity, and possibly drama and excitement through some tragedy. The abduction experience appears to fulfil those needs.

If the imagery of abduction phenomenon shares a common origin with much conventional pornography and sexual fantasy, its literature diverges sharply from much modern erotic literature, at least in apparent intent. First of all, regardless of their content, most erotic fiction presents itself as fantasy. There are one or two pieces of dire porn which make spurious claims to reveal the hidden secrets of a particular milieu, but much of it is honest about its fictional nature. Moreover, such material is written explicitly with the reader's sexual enjoyment and arousal in mind. Indeed, Hite and Friday's books can be considered celebrations of female sexuality as much as an investigation of it.

The opposite is the case with abduction literature. It's not written to celebrate such contact. Indeed, the events described are traumatic and the peripients explicitly wish them to stop, or that they had never begun in the first place. A few may consider they have established a meaningful rapport with creatures from another world, but this is very much a consolation prize after the trauma of abuse and violation they have experienced, and continue to experience. Far more than science fiction, it is a literature of warning: that we are powerless before our violators, from whom we can only expect more abuse and torment. Their might be an additional message urging us to care for the environment, and adopt a more pacifistic, spiritually enlightened lifestyle, but the explicit message is that the human race is being collectively raped while our military and political leaders stand by and collaborate. Fear the stars. Fear your government. Trust no one.

In actual fact, in this respect the abduction literature is fulfilling one of the social roles accorded to pornography, though that of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries rather than late 20th - early 21st. To the modern reader, one of the most bizarre features of the clandestine literature of pre-revolutionary

France is the seemingly incongruous mix of pornography and political message. Amid tales of sexual debauchery and the systematic abuse of the lower orders by the royal family and aristocracy, the genre also featured the exploits of sexually and politically liberated heroines whose nocturnal and diurnal adventures were interspersed with lengthy expositions of political philosophy. The result can read rather like Karl Marx would, if he had written for *Playboy* instead of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. The most obvious example of the genre are the turgid works of the Marquis de Sade, in which lengthy and tedious descriptions of just about every cruel and abusive act imaginable is interspersed with equally lengthy and tedious expositions of his revolutionary philosophy. Again, the central character of at least one of his works, *Justine, Ou La Philosophie dans Le Boudoir*, is female. A woman abused and humiliated by the aristocracy, she becomes an abuser herself, gaily killing and torturing her servants with the same cruel abandon her noble guardians did to her, justifying her cruelties with philosophical arguments on the superiority of the truly liberated individual to conventional slave morality. As a moral philosophy, it predates Nietzsche by almost a century. It might have influenced him too, though there is an important difference. Nietzsche always maintained that his writings were a *gedankenexperiment*: 'I write for people who like to sit and think, no more.'

This politicised porn was not a break from established tradition either. From the seventeenth century onwards, pornography fulfilled a distinctly political function, as a scurrilous vehicle by which the disaffected attacked established authority. One of the most notorious 17th century pornographers, Ferrante Pallavicino, has been described as 'an angry young man, who in his short life lambasted the hypocrisies of society, the Roman Catholic church, particularly the Jesuits, tradition and the idea of religious belief in general. He paid for his critical stance by being beheaded at Avignon in 1644.'<sup>20</sup> After Cromwell's victory in the Civil War, the Puritan was satirised as a hypocrite and sexual pervert, who 'crept to brothels, where his spe-

cial predilection was for flagellation or even sodomy.'<sup>21</sup> The essentially passive role of the male Puritan in this pornography links it to the descriptions of abuse recounted by male abductees, which may also have undercurrents of homosexuality. Male Puritans were so caricatured, not just because of their supposed hypocrisy in stressing marital fidelity and chastity, but also as a reaction to much of the feminist activity within the English Revolution. The sectarian milieu boasted a number of strong-minded, charismatic and influential women and Puritanism as a whole was rather more egalitarian than the rest of English society. As a result, Puritan women, especially the preachers, were vilified as promiscuous, adulterous termagants, who abused and cuckolded their husbands. The rape and homosexual abuse of male abductees may also stem from deep antifeminist sentiments, including the fear of female sexuality. Certainly the Far Right political milieu which has most vociferously supported it has a distinct antifeminist orientation and is strenuous in demanding a return to more traditional gender roles. After the Restoration, much pornography was written in the form of scurrilous satires directed against leading politicians such as Rochester, Dorset and Sedley, who were politically aligned with the Whig opposition in the 1670s.

From the Henrician reformation onwards, another favourite target of satire was the Roman Catholic church. The Catholic clergy were subject to the same accusations of hypocrisy and sexual licence as the Puritans of the Interregnum, including sexual cruelty. Several were based on real scandals, such as the excesses of the Borgian popes, and Cornelius Adriaensen in Bruges. Adriaensen was the founder of a secret order among the women of Bruges, who were persuaded to meet him in secret, undress, and be chastised for their sins. The order was eventually betrayed to the local authorities by two unwilling novices, Betteken Maes and Celleken Pieters. Although Adriaensen fled Bruges in 1563 and died in Ypres in 1581, his exploits were still making the rounds as late as 1688, when he appeared as the anti-hero of the ballad *The Lusty Fryar of Flanders*. The sadistic abuse of the orders 'sisters' is an obvious par-

allel to the female abductees abuse at the hands of the Greys and secret government. Needless to say, child abuse was also the standard staple of these vicious attacks. The vicious anti-Catholic book *An Anatomy of the English Nunnery in Lisbon* alleged that the bones of the nun's illegitimate children were kept hidden in a place in the wall of the convent garden. Sadly, this libel is not confined to previous centuries. In Jack Chick's pathologically anti-Catholic 'Christian' comic, *Alberto*, the same assertion is made of the murder and concealment of the remains of the illegitimate children born to monks and nuns.

During the 19th century much low literature, even if not exactly pornographic, fulfilled much the same function. These frequented chronicled the adventures of pure, virtuous women victimised and abused by members of the nobility with cruel or vicious tastes. Although not necessarily socialist or even politically radical, this type of literature did demonstrate the sharp alienation of certain sections of the contemporary urban working class to the aristocratic order. For example, one passage of contemporary literature with an immense appeal to its largely illiterate audience of costermongers, described the heroine's imprisonment within specially designed armchair, from which sprang manacles and steel bands. Naturally, the heroine possessed 'glowing cheeks, flashing eyes and palpitating bosom' and her manacles and steel bands were 'covered with velvet, so that they inflicted no positive injury upon her, nor even produced the slightest abrasion of her fair and polished skin'. The reader of this particular lurid passage noted the galvanising effect it had on his audience. 'Here all my audience ... broke out with - "Aye! that's the way the harristocrats hooks it. There's nothing o' that sort among us; the rich has all that barrikin to themselves." "Yes, that the b---- way the taxes goes in," shouted a woman.'<sup>22</sup>

The literature of alien abduction, like this antiquarian porn, performs exactly the same social function: it documents and promotes an increasingly radical alienation from the state. Like their predecessors of previous centuries, the leaders and senior bureaucrats of the modern state are engaged in a massive campaign of victimisa-

tion and exploitation. They may, with the exception of the royal family, no longer be the aristocratic seigneurs of the ancien régime, but the bourgeois politicians and mandarins of Whitehall and Washington still fulfil the same functions within this particular pornographic discourse. They are cruel and sadistic abusers, intent on perpetuating some even more secret, hideous conspiracy. It's this aspect which allows the abduction hysteria to blur and merge seamlessly with the recovered memory scandal into one gigantic conspiracy theory. The works of Hopkins, Mack, Jacobs and Streiber are of a type, and an influence on, the equally bizarre narratives of Cathy O'Brien and her deprogrammer, Mark Phillips. O'Brien's memories, as recorded by Phillips, are about her programming and abuse as a sex slave for a series of American presidents and senior political figures as part of the Monarch mind control programme. As is to be expected from conspiracy material of this type, at the heart of the Monarch programme are the allegedly Satanist royalty of Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain and Britain, Nazi and Italian scientists working for the US military after the War and, of course, our old friends the Illuminati. Despite the lack of any documentation for all this aside from O'Brien's testimony to Phillips, it's been enthusiastically taken up by certain elements in the American extreme Right. It's discussed extensively in *Contact*, the magazine of the dubious revelations of Hatonn, a 9 1/2 foot tall reptilian from the Pleades, who utters his tedious comments and daft insights through Doris Ecker.<sup>23</sup> Hatonn, or Ecker, declared sometime ago that there really was a Jewish plot to enslave gentiles, like the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and that Flying Saucers were built by the Nazis. Ecker's has connections with Bo Gritz, one of the leading figures in the American militia movement, and has clearly influenced Texe Mars and David Icke. Unfortunately, O'Brien is not the only victim of memory obsessed with the alleged reptilian nature of the royal family and their rapacious thirst for human blood. There's also Arizona Wilder and Christine Fitzgerald. Unsurprisingly, Fitzgerald also claims to have been a friend and confidante of Princess Diana for about nine

years.<sup>24</sup> The great concert by Jean-Michel Jarre marking the Millennium at the great pyramid of Giza, according to Marrs, wasn't harmless entertainment, but a ploy to divert attention from Masonic rituals conducted by former President Bush and the British royal family to usher in the Age of Horus.<sup>25</sup> Marrs cited as his authority for this ridiculous statement David Icke, already notorious for including holocaust denial material and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in *The Robots' Rebellion* and later tomes.

There is, however, a profound difference between the political use of this type of material and the politicised porn of the 18th century. The heroines of the *ancien régime*'s pervy books were spirited, liberated women adopting an active role in support of democratic, libertarian ideals. The right-wing conspiracists of the latter *fin de siècle* may claim to act in the name of democracy and liberty, but their ideals are distinctly authoritarian. *Liberte, egalite, fraternite* were the watchwords of the French revolution, but this has long since departed from the far Right. All Marrs and his fellows offer is religious and racial intolerance. The women narrating this discourse are entirely passive. They have no role except as the victims of the new political elite. In this it mirrors the worst of Restoration pornography, which was expressly misogynistic. Within its discourse, 'women ... are frequently epitomised as their sexual organs.'<sup>26</sup> While this is undoubtedly influential in the development of the image of the cruel and debauched aristocrat, it also attests to the perennial antisemetic use of much pornography, especially that involving violence, in reducing women to objects. The violently misogynist pornography of the Restoration came after the feminist upheaval of the English revolution, during which women became preachers, left their husbands for other men, and which increasingly stressed mutuality, companionship and affection within marriage in the theology of the more progressive and radical of the sectarians. This was in sharp contrast to the traditional, medieval conception of matrimony as a social contract for the procreation of children in which the female partner was firmly subordinate to the male. The modern narrators of such tales

**19.** See Schnabel, J., *Dark White*, Penguin 1995, p. 276.

**20.** Thompson, R., op. cit., p. 34.

**21.** Thompson, op. cit., p. 41.

**22.** Mayhew, H., *Mayhew's London*, Bracken Books, 1984, p. 67.

**23.** See Fritz Springmeier, 'Project Monarch: How the U.S. Creates Slaves of Satan' in Parfrey, A., *Cult Rapture*, Feral House, 1995, pp. 241-248.

**24.** McClure, K., ibid, p. 31.

**25.** See *The Sentinel* (Arizona) of 15/11/99, reproduced in Victor Lewis-Smith's Funny Old World Column in *Private Eye*, 24th December, 1999, p. 24.

**26.** Thompson, op. cit., p. 121.

**27.** Thomas, D., quoted in Thompson, op. cit., p. 26.

**28.** Burne, J., 'Just Deserts for Jealousy', review of Buss, D., *The Dangerous Passion: Why Jealousy is as Necessary as Love or Sex*, Bloomsbury, 2000, in *Financial Times*, Weekend June 3/4, page V.

**29.** The Hierophant, *Fortean Times* no. 117, p. 61.

of perversion and exploitation are no different. The Gnostic knowledge retailed by Icke claims to set people free, but its narrators remain located firmly in their delusionary bondage. As self-professed victims, it's not surprising that they claim kinship with Princess Diana, who since her death as arguably become the most powerful image of feminine suffering in the late 20th century.

These differences aside, the parallels between the abduction literature and pornography, in both form, content and social function, are too close to be disregarded. Regardless of its alleged intention to inform, rather than arouse, contemporary abduction and close-encounter literature is the modern equivalent of late 18th and 19th century gothic and Decadent erotica.

Describing it as such is one thing. Dealing with it is another.

At the societal level, the masochistic elements of the abduction fantasy are profoundly contrary to contemporary trends. Most of the heroines of popular science fiction in recent years, for example have been active, even aggressive figures: Buffy, Xena, and Ripley of the *Alien* movies, to name but a few. Even the mass merchandising launched on the back of the abduction craze tries to play down the victim's passivity. One of the t-shirts advertised in one of the less discerning magazines described its central image of a woman surrounded by her alien captors as 'their willing victim', presumably in an attempt to avoid the accusation that they were encouraging rape. It's almost as if the percipients, or their hypnotists and interrogators, were wilfully and perversely trying to retreat from their more active role into a more traditional discourse of feminine victimhood and passivity. As traditional masculine roles and status is challenged by feminism, it's a role which an increasing number of men feel compelled to accept. Their apparently active role in the rape of female abductees is illusory. As meat puppets under the control of the Greys' telepathic will, they themselves are passive objects of lusts and desires not their own. Their experience as traumatised prisoners in their own bodies, passively observing while something else rapes and abuses through their flesh could represent a fantasized form of alienation

from their own sexuality, in which the morally censorious superego, impressed with feminist suspicions of male sexuality, tries to distance itself from the appetites of the flesh by projecting its actions onto a rapacious, omnipotent other. It may also represent a form of the terror of losing control which habitually assault many obsessive-compulsives.

Although obsessive-compulsive disorder is characterised by the intense compulsion to perform repetitive, ritualised acts, usually to ward off some threatened disaster, it may also take the form of obsessive ruminations in which the sufferer speculates obsessively on what would happen if he lost control and performed some abhorrent, usually violent or sexual act. Cases from the 19th century include that of a man who surrendered himself to the police, fearing that he was about to murder his sister. The man stated firmly that he was devoted to her and that she was more precious to him than anything else in the world, yet he feared being overtaken by a violent, pathological mania which would result in her destruction. More recent examples include a woman who sought medical help after imagining that she was eviscerating her husband while gutting fish, for the same reason as the above Victorian gentleman. She feared that she was about to lose control, and give in to a savagely irrational urge to harm the person closest to her. Of course, it could also be that the reports of rape by 'turned off' males are projections of the aggressive elements of the investigators' personalities which produced the confabulations of abuse and rape within the abduction narrative. The psychological trauma and distancing of the human puppets in this part of the scenario could be a form of passive resistance, in which the male abductee attempts to shrug off the role dictated for him by the investigator. Regardless of the precise cause for this retreat into passivity, it represents an attempt to evade the danger of responsibility for one's own actions, something of which the percipient, female or male, can be absolved through their status as victim. It's clear from these fantasies' content that many of the percipients are uncomfortable with their sexuality. One solution may be for health professionals to re-

assure those vulnerable to such false memories that their sexuality is a normal, natural part of their psychology. It goes without saying that care should be taken not to encourage socially unacceptable forms, such as paedophilia, or where the percipient may act out extreme sadistic or masochistic fantasies.

A change in the broader discourse of pornographic narratives could be beneficial as well. Although much pornography is misogynistic, it was not always so. *The School of Venus*, published in English in 1680, which took the form of the sexual education of a young girl, Fanchon, by the older and more experienced Susanne, has been described as being 'not a piece of escapist pornography but a realistic glimpse of sexual happiness' in contrast to 'the neurotic and sadistic pornography of the last two centuries.' 27 Human nature may not be as biologically fixed and determined as the evolutionary psychologists consider. contrary to the predictions of the sociobiologists, it now appears 'that promiscuous women can be perfectly happy and enjoy it, and that well-paid female executives have abandoned the old, supposedly hard-wired female preference for men with resources.' 28 It may be that as society changes a more female-friendly form of pornography will once again emerge. In this context even the abduction narrative may be altered for the better under the influence of porn. One anonymous female correspondent to the FT's *Hierophant* column noted the display of 'an alien probe' in one of New York's sex shops. 'While reluctant to road-test the implement in question, she did confide that she now feels significantly less alarmed at the prospect of abduction.' 29 This could be seen either as the further contamination of women's sexuality by the misogyny of much contemporary sexual discourse, or as women subverting this misogyny by appropriating it for their own sexual amusement. I prefer the latter.

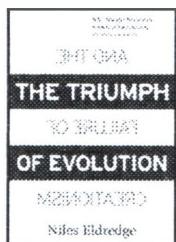
For most abductees, I would suggest, much could be done by simply reassuring them that their sexual or emotional problems do not stem from abuse by aliens. It is with this object in mind that the above essay was written.

At the level of ufology, it should be incumbent on all re-

searchers to challenge and submit claims of abduction and sexual assault by aliens to close, searching scrutiny. If possible, any published investigative material on abduction should be subject to the ethical constraints informing the publication of medical material. Most contemporary accounts of alien abduction are published by amateur investigators with little or no formal, recognised medical training, in a form designed to be populist and accessible. With the exception of sex manuals and other material written by doctors, gynaecologists and obstetricians with a view of encouraging people to enjoy a more fulfilling sex life, most sexological material written by academics is strongly antaphrodisiac. It's dry, clinical, considered and as about as erotically arousing as a tax form. And rightly so: the material is written to inform, not arouse. Its writers and researchers are also under the strict supervision of ethical review boards. One American academic who runs a course investigating human sexuality and body language was reported in the pages of the *Telegraph*'s Sunday supplement over a decade ago as insisting that her students take an oath to prevent them abusing their knowledge. This was after one of her students used the insights in the course to summon a strange man to her side from the other side of an airport bar and then ignored him for the rest of the evening. To the ethical researcher, the dignity of individual human beings far outweighs the possible value of his research or its publication. Any abduction material should therefore be subject to the same process of peer review, professional ethical codes, and published using the same deliberately anodyne discourse. Failing this, I would suggest that it should not be published at all. And none of it should be aimed at children.

In the meantime, if you're stuck in Waterstones facing a long and boring railway journey and your literary choice is either something by Mack, Hopkins, Jacobs et al, or the latest bonkbuster from Jilly Cooper, I'd go for the Cooper. It's probably better written, doesn't claim to be anything more than a work of fiction, and there's usually a happy ending, something which rarely occurs in the context of abductions.

# BOOK REVIEWS



delivers some hard knocks to the creationists, not only carefully pointing out their many errors, and just how well established the evidence for evolution is; but openly accusing them of lying and distortion. While creationism has often been dismissed rather patronisingly as an American fad; it is well worth drawing this book to the attention of a British audience, because of the growing indications that the radical right is preparing a similar culture war in this as in countries. Such books need also to be brought to the attention of the wider Fortean community, not least because of the willingness of some Forteans to use material from creationist sources as cudgels against 'scientific orthodoxy'.

It was also amusing to learn that the more sophisticated brand of creationism championed by radical-right lawyer Phillip E Johnson, the attack on scientific naturalism itself, has echoes of the attacks made on current evolution theory by Michael Swords, or by Brian Appleyard in this country.

**Nick Redfern and Jonathan Downes. *Weird War Tales 1: UFOs 1939-45*. Jonathan Downes, 2000 £7.00. Ringbound.**  
Given the work that Nick Redfern has done in the Public Record Office, I thought that the bulk of this little ringbound booklet would consist of newly discovered original documentation. Well, there is a bit of that, but most of this stuff is the same old collection of folklore, rumours, urban legends, tall tales and plain old lies told by ufologists and the people they meet in bars or after lectures, mostly of the 'when I was in the forces I came across...' variety. Thus all the tales of crashed flying

**Niles Eldredge.**  
*The Triumph of Evolution: the Failure of Creationism*. W H Freeman, 2000. £16.95.

A leading palaeontologist

saucers from the early 1940s are actually told years later, well into the modern flying saucer era.

Other stories featured such as the foo-fighters are more worthy of investigation, but only in the context of a rigid determination, not in evidence here, to separate out truly authentic contemporaneous documentation, for the layers of post 1947 fantasy and speculation.



£12.99, pbk.

There is one positive thing that can be said about this book, and that unlike some others in this series it is not written by some in-house hack with no knowledge of the field in which they are writing, as Ms Atwater has been a writer and researcher in this field for more than twenty years. She started researching after her own NDE, and this, of course introduces its own biases: it is very difficult to separate out in this book actual experiences, and her own New Age interpretations of them.

Perhaps that comment, though, implies that such a separation is possible, but this might not be the case, for what emerges here is just how culturally-bound the NDE really is. Virtually all the experiencers quoted here express their experiences in terms of what I think we can regard as an American folk religion distilled from

a mixture of pop occultism/new agery (itself rooted in American transcendentalism and spiritualism) and traditional Christianity, with American schmaltz and sentiment.

Ms Atwater appears to be aware of this, and indeed argues that, people will seek to express what are essentially ineffable experiences in language and culture familiar to them, and that there is a tendency for researchers and experiences together to reduce and stereotype the narratives to conform to standard models of the NDE. Yet, she does not see that she herself is doing much the same thing.

One point which should always be made is that the term 'Near Death Experience' is something of a misnomer, for what we are dealing with here are essentially, at best, memories. In some cases, especially with the alleged memories of NDEs of small children or in the womb, it seems, to put it mildly, unlikely that these are actually memories, rather they are memory-like fantasies constructed in later life. Atwater also notes that NDE-like experiences can be generated in other circumstances. A further problem, however, is that as we have

no



access to other peoples subjective experiences we have no way of knowing whether any of these people really have had the experiences, or possess the memories they claim. A kind of common sense suggests that most have, but common sense can be mistaken, and at least some of the stories reproduced here have some very problematic features, not so much the NDE itself but in the surrounding narrative (how long they were 'dead', claimed amazing abilities etc), generating a sense of unease, an unease which is certainly magnified in those cases where people are telling NDE stories to promote their religious and philosophical beliefs, and even more, to promote their (fee charging) services as 'therapists', 'workshop organisers' or merchandisers of New Age gear.

Similarly, it is unclear to what extent the claims of post NDE 'wild talents' are verified by third parties, preferably other than family members or close associates who may not wish to gainsay.

What is a bit clearer however, is that perhaps in this case sceptics have not been sceptical enough, in that, like Sue Blackmore for example, they have rather taken the standard model of the NDE at face value, and then sought to find 'rational' or 'scientific' explanations for each of the elements, overlooking the powerful, perhaps predominant role of culture in generating these stories. The best guess that we can make at the moment is to suggest that it is more probable than not that some, but not all NDE narratives, are based on actual 'memories', and that it is more probable than not that some, but not all, of these 'memories' are in some way generated by neurological events, including those caused by reduction in the blood supply to the brain for a brief period. Beyond that we cannot go.

*UFOs in the House of Lords, 1979. Abridged edition, Stationery Office, Uncovered Editions, 2000. £6.99, pbk.*

Uncovered Editions are a set of reprints of 'juicy stories' culled from official papers, and this one reproduces one of the more notorious debates in the old House of Lords. This was the debate on flying saucers in January 1979, introduced by the Earl of Clancarty, better known as Brinsley Le Poer Trench. Trench had once been the editor of *Flying Saucer Review* until his totally uncritical promotion of such characters as T. Lob-sang Rampa (alias Cecil Hoskins) got up the nose of even the generally credulous proprietor Wavenny Girvan. Trench later founded an organisation called the International Sky Scouts to promote friendship with the space brothers and in the 1970s wrote a book in defence of the hollow earth hypothesis. The somewhat high minded humanitarian concerns and 'all men are brothers' philosophy of the ISS (later Contact UK) sat rather curiously with Trench's other main concern in the House of Lords: his support for the racist Smith regime in Rhodesia.

Trench, a former market gardener, sat in the parliament of the United Kingdom because some distant relative who was an Irish peer (some of whom sat in the House of Lords because of a deal to get the Anglo-Irish treaty through the Conservative party in the 1920s) had popped his clogs without leaving any kids behind to inherit. In short a walking advertisement for abolishing the House of Lords.

Even at the time the debate was noted for its poor quality, and now seems like something out of a past age. Of course, most members who spoke were about ninety at the time and were the representative of a past age. The result was a bunch of old windbags rabbiting about something, which for the most part, they knew next to nothing about. Sadly it must be said that the superannuated political hacks and representatives of the 'great and the good' who spoke were just as out of it as the hereditaries.

As account of the debate this edition is not as good as John Michell's published at the time, because it provides no real background, or even a guide as to who actually the speakers were.



**Miriam Akhtar and Steve Humphries, with Lucy Swindler. *Far Out: the dawning of New Age Britain*. Sanson and Company in Association with Channel Four Television, 1999. £14.99**

The book of a Channel Four documentary series featuring the memories of those in the occult, spiritualist and related proto-New Age subcultures in the inter-war and early post-war years. Most of the speakers come across as sincere and generally amiable, albeit in many cases a bit, or more than a bit, eccentric. Unlike many of today's New Agers, most of these people seem to have been genuinely idealistic, many committed to social reforms which in their day were highly controversial, and which took a great deal of courage to espouse. They are the last representatives of a time when the New Age movement had a considerable degree of overlap with progressive political movements, which themselves had loftier ideals than managing the masses on behalf of international corporate capitalism in a slightly more humane manner than the Right.

Of course it must be said that this is very much an uncritical account, and that some of the less politically correct features of these movements may have been airbrushed out, for example the antisemitism of elements of the Theosophical movements, the association between family reform and free love on the one hand and eugenics; the voyeuristic flagellism of G. B. Gardner, or that some of these terribly sincere people may actually be con-artists or their dupes.

## 25 YEARS AGO

Well, here we are again. In November 1975 the Great Hiatus ended, and *MUFON* was back in production with 'New Series No. One'. Outwardly there had been few changes since *MUFON* abruptly ceased publication a year and a half earlier: a lithoed cover with eighteen duplicated pages. Behind the scenes, however, quite a lot had happened. Two years earlier I had married and moved to a new home and a new job in London. John Harney, back on Merseyside, had produced the last two issues of the old series.

But since then, by coincidence, John had been transferred from his post at the Liverpool Port Meteorological Office to the Met. Office's Kew Observatory, just a few miles away on the other side of Richmond park from where I was living in New Malden. We began meeting regularly at the Tudor Close, a pub near Richmond, and soon Roger Sandell joined us as a regular member of the team. *MUFON* New Series was born, with me as the editor.

The cover of Issue One illustrated Peter Rogerson's article 'The Phantom Ship and the UFO' with the 'ship in the clouds' drawing that now decorates the *Magonia* Internet homepage. The article was a summary of historical phantom ship legends, pointing out similarities to modern UFO reports - the type of thing which is now disparaged as 'literary criticism'. The issue also featured 'The Loot of the Lecturer', a humorous account by Roger Sandell of a talk in London given by Eric von Daniken.

Peter Rogerson's *INTCAT* listings occupied the last six pages of the issue. These were largely an update of earlier entries after our prolonged absence, including many additions and corrections to the 1897 airship data gleaned from Jerome Clark and Loren Coleman's excellent book *The Unidentified*.

This was to prove the last of the duplicated issues. the old stencil duplicators were fading away, and the era of economical instant print was dawning.



**W. Adam Mandelbaum.** *The Psychic Battlefield: behind the lines of paranormal Espionage.* Vision, 2000. £9.99.

Anyone expecting anything new or exiting in this book is going to be disappointed, for it is essentially the same old 'remote viewing' caper told from the angle of Joseph McMoneagle, who is praised to the heights, while the dirt is dished on rivals such as Ed Dames and David Moorehouse. This is a rather thin story, long on assertion, short on actual evidence so it is padded out with a lot of historical stuff of dubious relevancy and accuracy.

It is not entirely clear what Mandelbaum makes of all this, as a practising ritual magician cum tarot card reader who is also the attorney for a 'leading New York sceptics organisation'. he clearly is having to serve interests so mutually contradictory as to task the skills of even Tony Blair. His chief way out is to find a common enemy, the Roman Catholic Church. He also argues that within twenty years the paranormal will be established and will do this that and the other, which might be more impressive if we hadn't been hearing it for 150 years.

There some amusing vignettes, such as the portrayal of General 'Spoonbender' Stubblebine, a

weird character who ought to have been portrayed by Peter Sellers.

Of course Americans have no monopoly on military weirdoes. Our own Air Chief Marshall 'Stuffy' Dowding a believer in spirits, space brothers, fairies at the bottom of the garden and the efficacy of politely asking the mice to leave your house, would take some beating on that score.

**William Baldwin.** *CE-IV: close encounters of the possession kind.* Headline Books, 1999.



£9.99, pbk.  
Is there any limit to the superstitious crap that self proclaimed therapists will either believe in, or persuade their

daft clients to believe in? Judging by this book, the answer is no. Baldwin, a one time dentist turned New Age therapist goes in for spirit releasement therapy, which is a sort of more touchy feely politically correct (demons aren't intrinsically evil, they're just misled) form of exorcism which will clear you for ghosts, boggarts, ETs, the divas who have jumped off the weed you have been smoking etc.

Though such indelicacies are not gone into here, I can't help suspecting that the fees for all of this might be rather more than those charged for filling molars.



**Timothy Good.** *Unearthly Disclosure: conflicting interests in the control of extraterrestrial intelligence.* Century, 2000. £16.99  
As usual, Timothy Good regales us with some interesting UFO yarns. His technique must now be familiar to most readers. Take some sensational reports, then select accounts of investigations by the more credulous researchers. The work of the more sceptical or probing investigators is ignored or brushed aside. Of course, Good takes the trouble to make contact with many witnesses and investigators and - surprise, surprise - most of them tell him what he wants to hear.

Even Good's boundless credulity is strained on occasion though. He devotes three chapters to the absurd stories told by the contactee Enrique Castillo Rincón about his encounters with Nordics from the Pleiades, admits that they are unbelievable, but concludes somewhat lamely: "Most probably his narrative is a mixture of truth and fiction. Whatever the case, he has provided us with a fascinating story and one which I believe contains important new insights". He doesn't give us any indication of what these insights might be, of course, and such remarks are typical of his incisive analysis of UFO narratives. But perhaps he is reluctant to indulge in 'literary criticism'.

*John Harney (reprinted from Magonia Monthly Supplement)*

**Don Berliner with Marie Galbraith and Antonio Huneeus.** *UFO Briefing Document: the best available evidence.* Dell, 2000. £5.99, pbk.



This is the briefing prepared by the Lincoln Rockefeller foundation to persuade scientists and others to take UFOs seriously, and has been

endorsed by CUFOS, MUFON and the Fund for UFO Research as providing the 'best available evidence for the existence of UFOs'. So the supporters of ETH have put down their money. Some of the chapters deal with groups of cases, but the individual 'best' turn out to be Lakeneath, Trindade, Socorro, Falcon Lake, Canary Islands 1976, Tehran, Rendlesham, Tans-en-Provence, a 1986 Brazilian aircraft report, the Japan Airlines report, Kapustin Yar 1989, and the Belgium UFO wave. As you can see most of these are the same old suspects, and *Magonia* readers will be aware that serious questions have been raised about several of them. Rendlesham has gone, Trans is deeply suspect; others have had conventional explanations given, still others may well be hoaxes. Only occasionally do the authors give hints as to the complexities and arguments surrounding these reports which are presented in one sided essentially pro ETH light.

Even on their own terms, as attempts to convince scientists as to the 'reality of UFOs' these presentations fail, because they give nowhere enough detail and background for readers to come to their own conclusions, they are little more than news briefings. Instead of detailed accounts, giving all sides and emphasising the complexities of UFO cases, the report wastes a vast chunk of space of padding, including 56 pages devoted to a pointless one sided collection of quotations, some of which are out of context, some of which may be apocryphal and still others just ufologists giving their spiel. Nobody outside of the

paranormal does anything but laugh at this sort of attempted argument from authority these days.

There is also space left to flog the dead horse of Roswell, and to engage in speculation about the UFO secrecy being at the behest of the aliens who are running things behind the scenes, back engineering and the like, and the belief that Air Force secrecy means there is proof of the ETH. Sceptics can think of other reasons for secrecy, for example I'm sure, to take, of course purely hypothetical examples, that the authorities wouldn't like it to be known that certain atmospheric conditions render their fabulously expensive state of the art radar system useless, that there have been a number of occasions on which air line passengers have been injured when the plane swerved to avoid Venus, that the personnel guarding highly sensitive nuclear weapons bases are so stoned on cannabis, cocaine and high octane booze that they don't know whether they're in Middletown USA or Zeta Zeticulli, or that that personnel on another base sell wild stories of base life in exchange for sexual favours. Still less do they want you to know about the crashed nuclear bomber which contaminated the kindergarten which the local senator's brother-in-law's business partner's kids attended, and above all they don't want you to know about the day a flock of pelicans brought us to within ten seconds of World War III.

UFO reports may be worthy of scientific investigation but you wouldn't know if from this botch-up. Its endorsement by the three leading US UFO groups establishes, if we didn't already know it, that they are essentially partisan advocacy groups in favour of the ETH, with little interest in a genuinely open minded and open ended study of UFO reports. In their eyes anyone who does not endorse the ETH (or some more esoteric theory involving non-human intelligences) is a debunker, and any conventional explanation of their favourite cases is to be automatically denounced.

**Nick Redfern and Jonathan Downes.** *Weird War Tales 1: UFOs 1939-45. Jonathan Downes, 2000 £7.00. Ringbound.*

Given the work that Nick Redfern has done in the Public Record Office, I thought that the bulk of this little ringbound booklet would consist of newly discovered original documentation. Well there is a bit of that, but most of this stuff is the same old collection of folklore, rumours, urban legends, tall tales and plain old lies told by ufologists and the people they meet in bars or after lectures, mostly of the 'when I was in the forces I came across...' variety. Thus all the tales of crashed flying saucers from the early 1940s are actually told years later, well into the modern flying saucer era.

**John Michell and Bob Rickard.** *Unexplained Phenomena: a Rough Guide Special.* Rough Guides/Penguin, 2000.

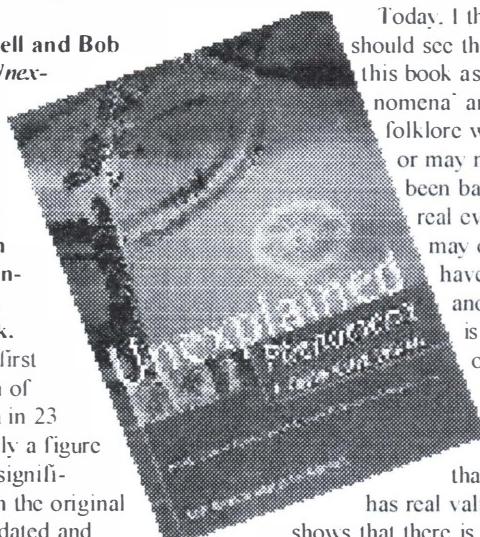
£12.99, pbk. This is the first new edition of *Phenomena* in 23 years (surely a figure of Fortean significance), with the original material updated and much of their follow up *Living Wonders* included. How has this classic survived the years? Well it certainly is a great testimony to the 'cult of librarianship' in that a huge quantity of obscure anecdotes from a vast range of sources have been collated together, illustrated with a wide range of excellent drawings and photographs. It preserves the Fortean spirit of linking a wide range of experiences and stories together across categories; and for the new comer gives an excellent introduction to the range of alleged Fortean phenomena from teleportation to strange rains, ufos, lake monsters, the madness of crowds and all sorts of strange things that nobody could possibly classify.

Yet in some sense I can't help feeling that it does not do justice to the real Bob Rickard or today's FT. Perhaps because the dominant voice is that of John Michell, there is a distinct air of seventies na-

iv etc about it, a throwback to the days when we took the stories told by Frank Edwards, Vincent Gaddis, Ivan T. Sanderson, Brad Steiger etc. at face value, and before the torrent of Fortean revisionism, much of it undertaken by Bob and his colleagues at FT. The spirit of today's FT, is, I think much better represented by Mike Dash's *Borderlands*. Just as an example, the very first story is that of the Spanish soldier teleported from the Philippines to Mexico City: a story very effectively demolished by Bob Rickard in FT many years ago now. This suggests that perhaps too much of the seventies text has been allowed through without revision, though there are other areas where there is much more modernisation.

Today, I think we should see the stories in this book as less 'phenomena' and more as 'folklore which may or may not have been based on some real events, which may or may not have been anomalous. It is as a record of the persistence of folklore and belief that this book has real value. For it shows that there is very little new; most of today's strange stories contain echoes of traditions which span the centuries. Open to historical argument is whether these traditions have been preserved by peasant word of mouth as Victorian folklorists would have it, or through the power of the printed word and picture from the earliest broadsides onwards. If it exists anywhere this phenomenal reality exists in the collective human imagination, manifesting in our dreams and visions, subtly influencing many of our everyday perceptions and memories, sometimes overwhelming them, being solidified in a range of media from broadside to Internet.

To keep where stated, book reviews are by Peter Keleghan



**Peter Brookesmith.** *Alien abductions.* Blandford, 1998. £15.99 Peter Brookesmith's latest book is one of the very few studies of abductions which can be wholeheartedly recommended, a marvelously sane, caring study, which while rebutting the claims of the ET merchants, warns us not to dismiss the abduction myth as a 'nothing but'. This is a psychosocial orientated study which cannot be written off as the work of an armchair ufologist, for anyone less of an armchair ufologist it would be harder to find than PB He has toured much of the United States and has interviewed abductees and researchers both there and here in Britain, and presents their stories. I doubt if anyone has talked with Betty Hill, for example, in such depth in a good many years.

What is clear, is that he listened to these stories in a way that few of the ET promoters have. He is particularly scathing with David Jacobs who, he argues, follows the profoundly unscientific principle that no one should undertake any research unless its results are known beforehand.

Presenting narratives without this prior distortion gives some impression as to their diversity. Even where there are superficial similarities, there often great differences.

Brookesmith suggests areas of potential explanation, the most fruitful being that of sleep disorders and other altered states, perhaps in some cases triggered by environmental impulses. Of particular interest is his account of the narcoleptic David Howard - narcolepsy being a neurological disorder in which the sufferer spontaneously goes into dreaming sleep from wakefulness, often during the day. Dreams are intensely vivid and realistic, there are episodes of aware sleep paralysis, daytime paralysis, and periods of 'absence' and missing time. Howard at one point dreamed so frequently and so clearly that it seemed he was living parallel lives, here on earth and in the battlefields of an alien planet of the imagination.

This absorption in an alien world is reminiscent of the story of Kirk Allen as studied by the psychiatrist Robert Lindner, who constructed a fantasy life in a science fiction future, and filled thousands of pages of manuscript with his 'biography'. Allen may have been an undiagnosed narcoleptic, but his narratives also evoke Caraboo syndrome. Howard's narratives also have echoes of Caraboo syndrome, and for some people narcolepsy may be opening into enhanced realms of creativity.

It is, however, not so much mechanism as meaning that interests Brookesmith, and as readers of *Magonia* are aware he sees the abduction myth as above all an example of the religious imagination in a modern world. This is a post modern religion, a child of the solipsistic age of the therapist. When Brookesmith allows the abductees the right of reply to his psychosocial interpretations, they come out with quotes such as 'I feel that in your commentary on mythology you are on a valid path, but would argue that what constitutes reality for one is not the same flavour to another', or 'I would have no patience for anyone who would disbelieve or dissuade me from my own truths... To me facts are arbitrary by definition, being true for one person and his experiences and yet, just as not true for other people in the same time and circumstances'.

In this post modern age truth and reality can be pick 'n' mix, off-the-shelf truths and a la carte reality. There is no central reality or vision that communities can agree on.

There is perhaps one doubt, and that is whether even such a sane and balanced account of the abduction experience as this, simply by being published in a 'popular' format and marketed does not help spread the abduction myth, an argument recently advanced by Kevin McClure. On the other hand, abduction books will not go away and if sensible books like this are not produced then the field will be left clear for the exploiters. I am not sure how we get out of this dilemma.

# THE PELICAN WRITES... ■



THE MAIN DRIVING FORCE of ufology is the belief that there is something genuinely mysterious going on behind the scenes of UFO reports and UFO lore. What keeps this belief going is a psychological need for mystery for most people, and a psychological need for notoriety, book contracts, lecture tours, etc. for a few people. Well, that's what the Pelican believes and, remember, he enjoys a bird's-eye view of the ufological scene.

There is only one rational approach to ufology and that is - yes, you are way ahead of the Pelican here - the Psychosocial Hypothesis (PSH). Now it might be argued that the ETH is also rational and it must be admitted that it is at least logically possible. If there are alien craft out there, they could possibly be seen flying through our atmosphere. Their occupants could occasionally abduct people if they had a mind to do so, but not on the industrial scale alleged by Hopkins, Jacobs, and friends. However, as it is generally agreed that most UFO reports can be explained without recourse to the ETH, then the PSH can satisfactorily account for them.

The real problem is that some people accept neither the PSH nor the ETH. Instead, they babble about UFO manifestations coming from "other dimensions" or having "higher rates of vibrations". They employ many other strange terms which all have one thing in common. They can sound good, especially if you can say them with apparent sincerity, and without getting the giggles, but they are utterly meaningless.

There are numerous examples in the UFO literature. Take Jacques Vallee, for instance. In his book *Revelations* he writes: "The genuine UFO phenomenon . . . is associated with a form of nonhuman consciousness that manipulates space and time in ways we do not understand" and "The entities could be multidimensional beyond space-time itself. *They could even be fractal beings.*" (1)

If any readers can make any sense of this the Pelican would be delighted to hear from them.

Indulgence in this sort of nonsense can ruin what would otherwise be useful contributions to the subject, particularly where alien abduction stories are concerned. A good example is a book by Ann Druffel entitled *How to Defend Yourself Against Alien Abduction*. (2) Now Druffel doesn't believe that solid, physical aliens arriving in nuts-and-bolts saucers can actually float through bedroom walls, but she doesn't want to come out and say that the problem is thus one for the psychologists, psychiatrists and neurologists. She writes: "I regard the cases discussed herein as true accounts of encounters with unidentified beings who are real, at least on some level of reality." (3) What is a "level of reality", wonders the Pelican? Do these levels include social reality, on which level the UFO phenomenon is undoubtedly real; or does she mean subjective reality, as in dreams or hallucinations, which often seem to be real, but can be experienced only by the subject? Apparently not. It seems that "... the greys might be interdimensional in nature or, alternatively, that they may normally exist in an invisible portion of our own electromagnetic (EM) spectrum. In other words, they might not originate in our *normally perceived* space-time . . ." (4) Again, we have jargon which is totally meaningless (at least in the context in which it is used). Let's get it straight. Ann. Either the Greys are real, physical creatures, or they are imaginary. There is no third way.

But there is hope yet. She writes: "Even if all abduction scenarios prove to be some type of psychological aberration, as some skeptics and debunkers conclude, the resistance techniques described can still be effective for Group One through Three." (5) These three techniques are Mental Struggle, Physical Struggle and Righteous Anger. They would indeed be likely to prove effective against imaginary entities, and thus her advice could be very useful to those who think they are constantly being abducted by aliens. How these and the other techniques described could be effective against "interdimensional" beings is not clear, though.

Why, asks the Pelican, do these beings never seem to get

stuck in our dimensions or part of the spectrum? Why can't they be seen by anyone who happens to be around when they appear? Why can't their appearances be recorded clearly on film or video?

Anyway, if we scrub out all the nonsense about other dimensions, etc., we are left with an interesting and possibly very useful book for abductees and those who try to help them. So what has been the response to Druffel's work by certain high-profile American abduction experts? Zero. Nothing. Dead silence. In a recent article, she wonders why (perhaps a tiny bit disingenuously). (6) She speculates that perhaps her ideas do not fit in with their hypotheses, but the cynical old Pelican suspects that perhaps if these people tried out her techniques and they worked, then eventually the whole problem would be cleared up and they would fade gently into obscurity. Not a happy prospect for egomaniacs who delight in preening themselves on the stages at UFO conferences and being surrounded by admiring circles of support groups and assorted harmless lunatics.

To return to UFOs and aliens in general, the Pelican has kept the best argument against their objective reality to the end. This has been said before, but not often enough. They are not real because they never provide any information. There is nothing in the UFO reports or literature that supplies us with any facts which are not already known, which are new and surprising, and which could be investigated and verified by scientists. Not only is this the case, but the UFO myth does not even have any consistent internal logic, and most reports are riddled with internal contradictions. Yes, there is no alternative. The PSH is the only way out of the UFO mess.

## References

1. Vallee, Jacques, *Revelations: Alien Contact and Human Deception*, Ballantine Books, New York, 1993, 259
2. Druffel, Ann, *How to Defend Yourself Against Alien Abduction*, Piatkus, London, 1998
3. Ibid., xi
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# HOLD THE BACK PAGE



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## Today Gleneagles, Tomorrow the Universe

Remember William Cooper, who used to hang around on the American UFO fringe a while back? Well here he is in the 'Funny Old World' column in *Private Eye*. Claiming that he has a video that "finally solves one of the greatest riddles of the twentieth century", showing that President Kennedy was killed by his driver in the Dallas motorcade, he told journalists in Kingman, Arizona: "The weapon used was not a pistol. It was a gas pressure device developed by alien beings from the Trilateral Commission."

Cooper is apparently now leader of something called the Arizona Militia. He goes on to explain, "It was all the work of the Jason Society. That's a society made up of disguised aliens, Jewish bankers, Catholics, lifeguards, golfers (it must be those sweaters) and drug lords, and presided over by Satan. They were plotting to ignite the atmosphere of Jupiter, using a red pepper steam bomb hidden on board the Galileo probe. They were doing this so the earth would then have two suns, just like the planet the aliens have left, and would be ready for invasion.

"But JFK had uncovered their plot, and was about to reveal the truth and foil their scheme. So they silenced him. The Jason Society will ignite Jupiter's atmosphere next year, and they have also sent AIDS to wipe out all the homosexuals, blacks and Hispanics, because those are the groups that might upset their invasion plans."

Challenged by a reporter who said that Cooper's film was just the Zapruder footage with some very badly acted new scenes cut into it, Cooper hastily adjourned the press conference. "Do not listen to members of the Jason Society. Stock up on canned food and buy an assault rifle. The aliens are coming"

(From the *Daily Mail and Guardian*, South Africa, 9/9/00)

## Remainders of the Day

Interesting to see copies of John Mack's opus *The Threat*, originally published at £16.99, being sold in a Dorchester remainder book shop at £1.99. Any other reports of UFO books being sold at prices closer to their value than to their published price eagerly awaited!

## Crystal Gazing

A strange little story on local TV the other week reported claims that the lacklustre fortunes of Crystal Palace football club had revived in recent weeks after a Palace fan had been surfing the Internet. Checking out an aerial view of the Selhurst Park pitch on an Internet street map site, he noticed that the ground had worn to show a Turin-Shroud style image of a long-haired, bearded Christ. After noticing this, the team's performance had improved.

Nonsense of course, but... well, check it out yourself. The full URL is too complicated to print here, but go to the Internet site [www.streetmap.co.uk](http://www.streetmap.co.uk), search using the name 'Selhurst Park', then click on the aerial photograph option. The image is definitely there, and in my view rather more convincing than some we've seen lately on windows, tortillas and damp walls. If Palace get promoted we may have to start re-thinking our sceptical position!

## The Tapes of Wrath

You must have come across those streams of unwound audio cassette tape that blow around your feet or get entangled in trees alongside the road. I had always thought they were simply a particularly irritating form of litter probably caused by motorists throwing cassettes out of car windows in attacks of road rage. But now it seems they may have a more sinister meaning. I quote from the on-line magazine of the Purley Baptist Church, in Surrey: "Perhaps not everyone is aware that, in order to put a curse on an

area, satanists record curses onto audio tape and then unravel it and leave it on sites they want to affect. Often these tapes can be found at crossings and busy junctions, by school crossings or outside churches. the volume of cursing tape being deposited around Purley is growing alarmingly. On one day recently we collected four or five reels.

Christians can clear this tape away by praying over and disposing of it. An appropriate prayer could be something like this:

Lord I thank you that the shed blood of Jesus is a powerful weapon against the enemy and I claim your protection over me, my family and household in the name of Jesus. In the name of Jesus I break the power of any curses on this tape and pray that you, Lord, will turn those curses into blessing..."

Does anyone know what this is all about? Is it an urban legend in the making, or is it something that has been around in the Evangelical world for some time? I've not seen it referred to in any of the books or websites devoted to urban legends. More importantly, has anyone actually recovered one of these tapes and then tried to play it to see what was really recorded?

## "And thanks to my agent, my producer, the film-crew, mum and dad..."

We're delighted to receive an award from the Spanish organisation *Fundacion Anomalia*. The CdU Prize (named after their own journal *Cuadernos de Ufologa*) was awarded to "recognise the merits achieved by the publication in the reporting and study of anomalous phenomena." Shortly after receiving this news a very attractive certificate arrived, which now graces the wall of the *Magonia* office. Thanks to V-J Ballester-Olmos, and the members of the Foundation.